

**A CONTRIBUTION OF KOREAN TRADITIONAL THEATER
TO LITURGICAL EXPRESSION**

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ABSTRACT

A Contribution of Korean Traditional Theater to Liturgical Expression

Seung Nam Kim

Although the Korean Protestant church is one hundred years old, until fairly recently Korean churches have adopted traditional Western theologies without considering the religio-cultural heritage of Korea. Therefore, Korean Christianity has been isolated from the other religious cultures of Korea. Consequently, the Korean churches have become strongly biased against traditional religions and various theatrical traditions.

Despite the missionaries' teaching, shaman music and dances are still attractive to the people. And shaman faith or custom is the most pervasive form of religious culture in Korea. Korean Christianity, although very Western in its liturgy and appearances, is obviously quite shamanistic in its belief and behavior. Korean shamanism in the contemporary world is a valuable tradition worthy of continuation. Shamanistic-rooted Korean traditional theater is not just the people's entertainment but also it was their part of religion.

T'alch'um (mask-dance drama) and *p'ansori* (mono-opera) are unique forms of traditional theater in Korea. This artistic expression is a cultural object used in religious ceremonies and community festivals. The Korean mask-dance drama is not just an entertainment. It is not just for the pleasure of the eye. The universal cultural and religious practice of the mask dance hides and reveals at one and the same time emotions deeply ingrained in human nature.

In the Korean traditional theater, *shinmyong* is a special artistic experience characterizing the popular aesthetic consciousness of the Korean people. This

gives aesthetic value to group performance plays such as mask-dance drama and *p'ansori*. *Shinmyong* gives rise to the birth of the people's enthusiastic and participating worship, whether on an individual or a group level.

The *shinmyong* is comparable to the Western Christian liturgical experience. Without God's descending experience the body of the worshiper cannot realize the life of God's people. *Shinmyong* is an embodiment and incarnation of the Spirit innate in each and every person. God is one with humans and everywhere in the universe. *Shinmyong* of this nature is universal and can occur to anyone who experiences human and divine union through ritualistic events.

The Church of Korea should acknowledge these theatrical phenomena as unique resources for the Christian liturgical theology. For the future, this artistic liturgical experience of *shinmyong* will contribute directly to the development of the Korean church worship.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed

The Korean Church has turned its back on its own culture and tradition in favor of Western Christianity. As a result, it has lost its indigenous cultural richness and value, and deprived itself of the resources available for its continuing liturgical development.

Importance of the Problem

Although the Korean Protestant church is one hundred years old, until fairly recently Korean churches adopted traditional Western theologies without considering the religio-cultural heritage of Korea. Therefore, Korean Christianity has been isolated from the other religious cultures of Korea. The missionaries taught the Korean people that accepting Christianity meant cutting ourselves from the way of life — the old way of religion. This is radical conversion, and what an act of conversion. Korean churches have been strongly biased against traditional religions and various theatrical traditions. This is especially true with Shamanism which both as the lowest grade of superstition and as the religion of the poor and ignorant, is usually excluded from the list of traditional Korean religions. Such an attitude is integrally related to the general bias against the poor people themselves.

Despite the missionaries' teaching, shaman music and dances are still attracting women and children and sometimes men. The shaman faith or custom is the most pervasive form of religious culture in Korea. Korean Christianity, although very Western in its liturgy and appearances, is obviously quite shamanistic in its belief and behavior. In the final analysis, Korean Christianity

may be characterized as shamanistic Christianity. The *kut*, a musico-dramatic ritual gives expression to the very soul and essence of the Korean people and their culture.

T'alch'um, mask-dance drama and *p'ansori*, mono opera, are unique forms of traditional theater in Korea. This artistic expression is a cultural object used in religious ceremonies and community festivals. The Korean mask-dance drama is not just an entertainment. It is not just for the pleasure of the eye. The universal cultural and religious practice of the mask dance hides and reveals at one and the same time emotions deeply ingrained in human nature.

The Korean traditional theater is not just the people's entertainment but was also their part of religion. Through the theatrical forms Korean people experienced the transcendence not only over the world controlled by their enemies but also over the total history including their own religion.

Thesis

This project develops a liturgical understanding of Korean traditional theater as a new liturgical resource of the Korean Church. In the future it could contribute to the journey of the common human spirituality.

Definitions of Major Terms

Korean Traditional Theater

Korean Traditional Theater that includes various forms of mask-dance drama, *p'ansori* (mono opera) and puppet plays are an important cultural asset of Korea. It is a long history that stretches back several hundred years; during this time it served religious, enlightenment, and amusement purposes.

Despite its long history and early popularity, this theater suffered a number of setbacks —almost to the point of extinction— especially from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of World War II. These were mainly the result of poor economic conditions, the oppressive measures taken by the occupying Japanese military, and a prejudice against the native arts as the influx of foreign influence became overwhelming.

For the past fifty years, however, some notable changes have taken place in the preservation of the rapidly disappearing forms of this theater. Since the second quarter of the twentieth century some scholars have begun to record theatrical activities. Since the end of World War II, productions of some plays have taken place. One important contribution to rehabilitate of the Korean traditional theater was the university student cultural groups (*moonwha-pae*) in the 1970s. The groups expressed the nation's democratization through the traditional theater movement.

Shamanism

Shamanism is the pervasive religious custom and culture of the Korean people. Elements of shamanism are currently being changed into forms of artistic expression. Similar changes are occurring for shaman ritual (*kut*) that is performed on stage. The advantage of this strategy is that the performance aspect of shamanism is tailored to urban, secular and even international audiences. In fact, the technical quality of art forms may be refined as the purely aesthetic aspects are elevated in importance over the religious function. This alternative is valuable as it enriches the artistic life of Korean and other societies. The main problem with this alternative is that it reduces the community experience of the sacred to a more individualistic experience that is often devoid of spiritual significance. The

historians of religions have pointed out that this approach diminishes the religious consciousness of participants.

It is acknowledged that Shamanism was the religion of the Korean people that sustained the people throughout the oppressive history of Korea, and that the shamanistic consciousness is the very basis of Korean consciousness.

Chung-choon Kim believes it is important for Christians today to reap the rich insight of the Korean shamanistic tradition. The role of the shaman is to appease the spirits of the dead. Kim sees a parallel here with God's support of the legitimate cries of the oppressed.¹

Korean Mask-Dance Drama

Like theater in many primitive societies, Korean mask-dance drama may have originated in dance performed as a part of religious ceremonies in ancient times. In the context of heaven worship (*chechon*)² and reverence to God, the people in the ancient society of Korea performed sacrificial rites at certain times during the year. To placate the supernatural forces, people sang and danced as part of these rituals.

The "master of ceremonies" for the ritual was a male shaman. One of his functions for the occasion was to perform a dance inducing the God to descend from heaven. The shaman's simple dance gradually developed into a more complicated one until eventually it became a form of dance drama.

¹ Chung-choon Kim, "God's Suffering in Men's Struggle," in *Living Theology in Asia*, ed. John C. England (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), 20.

² Heaven worship (*chechon*) refers to worship of God. In Korean, *che* means a ceremony or worship and *chon* means the heaven or God.

Among the important early ceremonial rites were *ch'ongun* (a ceremony for heaven worship) of Mahan, *muchon* (another kind of heaven worship ceremony) of Yae, and *yonggo* (a festival which was held in the twelfth month of the lunar calender) of Puyo. For these special ceremonial rites, it is presumed that some participants might have worn masks while they sang and danced.

If it is true that masks were worn by the participants in these ceremonies – although the literary documents to support this conjecture have yet to be found – the early form of mask-dance drama may have already been in existence in Korea before the period of the Three Kingdoms (18 B.C.-935 A.D.). By the time of the period of Silla (57 B.C.-935 A.D.), it is believed that such dances as *kommun*, a sword dance based on the story of the legendary seventh son of King Tonghaeyong, Ch'yong, which contained the rude elements of drama, had definitely emerged.

These mask-dance dramas of Silla were frequently performed during the Koryo period (918 A.D.-1392 A.D.). When the Koryo dynasty was succeeded by the Yi dynasty (1392 A.D.-1910 A.D.), the new court also accepted them as important cultural assets of Korea. It was during the later period of the Koryo dynasty when these many different forms of dance drama finally began to coalesce into a new kind of mask-dance drama.

Later, in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century with the development of village market economy, the performance of mask-dance drama became an urban affair and thus a market-centered community affair. It became a community activity, mainly staged around the harvest time. Hence, the people who act in the play are not recognizable. Less than ten people are in the play. One or two people, sometimes the people in the play, take turns playing musical instruments. There are some group dances, some solo dances, some

singing and some narratives. There are definite plots in the play, but the lines are rather free. Some players improvise the lines and sometimes they make impromptu speeches.

P'ansori

P'ansori is both music and literature. As music, it is a kind of folk music; as literature, it is also of the people, a kind of folk or oral literature. Music and literature are a combined gesture needed for this performance and are an essential element of *p'ansori*. It is a long form of vocal music in which one sings a work of narrative literature, while doing bodily movement.

The word, *p'ansori*, means “song sung upon having arranged a playground.” Also, *p'ansori* is a special form of vocal music and a special form of oral narrative poetry. Oral narrative poetry constitutes the singing of a story and embraces narrative folk songs, narrative shaman songs, and *p'ansori*. The narrative folk song is simple in content and can be sung by anybody. While the narrative a shaman sings deals with the history of a spirit and draws the listener's attention to supernatural principles, *p'ansori* introduces ordinary people on its stage and deals with questions that arise in the course of ordinary life. In all of oral literature, no form has such protean variety as *p'ansori*. *P'ansori* and mask-dance drama are the most important products of popular literature of the later Yi dynasty period. I can say that mask dance is to drama what *p'ansori* is to narrative literature.

Shinmyong

Shinmyong literally means that the God descends into the body of the supplicator. It means one receives God with his or her body and places oneself and

flies on the wind which God, within the one's body, blows out. This is to embody and incarnate the soul-spirit innate in each and every person. *Shinmyong* of this nature is universal and can occur to anyone who was enlightened with the understanding that the human is with Heaven. In the Korean traditional theater, the group performance plays, *shinmyong* is a special artistic experience characterizing the popular aesthetic consciousness of the Korean people, which enables the group performance plays such as mask-dance drama and *p'ansori* to be of aesthetic value.

Previous Work in this Area

Since the 1960s, the Korean traditional theater has interested the scholars of literature and arts. However, Tu-hyun Yi, a scholar of the Korean folklore has given much attention to the indigenous theater forms of Korea and published *Hankuk-ui Kamyunkuk* (Korean mask-drama) in 1979. Yi reported some valuable resources of Korean mask-dance drama such as its history, structure, plays and some general information. Six years after the publication of Yi's work, Jin-tae Park reported his study of the Korean mask-drama (1985). Park researched the correlation between the development of mask-dance drama and shamanism. These studies contributed to the mask-dance drama play movement of the universities' in the 1980s. When military dictatorship was high-handed, the students of universities found another way of protesting for the nation's democratization by frequently performing mask-dance dramas.

At the same time, a group of theologians were deeply concerned with the political situation in Korea. The theologians seriously studied the history, religion, and culture of Korea from the *minjung's* perspective. In 1976, Nam-dong-Shu's *Theology at a Turning Point* was published. In the book Suh agreed

that the Korean *minjung*'s stories are new theological resources. This book attracted the attention of many theologians world-wide. After that, Young-hak Hyun reported various cultural studies from the theological perspective. In particular, his article "A Theological Look at the Mask-dance in Korea" was published in 1981. Hyun presented the Korean traditional theater as another story of the *minjung*, and analyzed it for theological content. Since then, other works has been done on Korean traditional theater literature and aesthetic work. Most of these books and articles are listed in the bibliography. However, I have not been able to find work dealing with the specific theological issues of this project.

Scope and Limitation

This project deals with the Korean traditional theater, Pongsan mask-dance drama and *p'ansori* as new resources of liturgy for the Korean church. Pongsan mask-dance drama and *p'ansori* are representative of Korean traditional theater forms and originated from shamanistic ritual. I will analyze the structure of forms of traditional theater through the aesthetic aspect, look at its reality of relationship between actors and community, and develop the liturgical implication. This project will be concerned with its use in the Korean church in Korea and the Korean community churches in America.

Procedure for Integration

The project draws together insights from theology, liturgy, and theater studies, to introduce a new understanding of the Korean traditional theater that may contribute insight for the continuing development of Korean worship. The various aspects will be investigated and integrated through the use of library research, personal resources and the films and recordings of these theater forms.

CHAPTER 2

The Characteristic of Korean *Minjung* Culture

Introduction

In the study of Chinese history, instructionalism (*kamgyu chuui*) and reverence for the past (*sanggo chuui*) are often referred to as characteristic of the Chinese historical consciousness.¹ Instructionalism is a moralistic tendency that looks to the past in order to discover suitable norms for behavior. Its main function in the past was to strengthen the emperor's position as sovereign. This it achieved by offering advice about factors that affected the rise and fall of a nation and the welfare of its people, and conduct which either should be avoided or put forward as exemplary. Consequently, only individuals who were conspicuous for either their virtue or vice tended to appear in historical accounts. A reverence for the past was exemplified through idealization of instructions and training which had a long tradition and that were therefore modeled on the past and consequently took little notice of present or future needs. Such historical consciousness was, as one might expect, based on the Confucian classic. It formed the mainstream of Chinese scholarship, and there was little attempt to introduce a more progressive consciousness.

Confucianism had been transferred from China to Korea, and the Korean Peninsula is located within the area that traditionally has been influenced by Chinese culture. It is natural, then, that the Chinese approach to historical cognition should strongly influence the historical view among Koreans. Accordingly, the traditional history of Korea was described primarily in terms of

¹ Hae-jong Cho, *Introduction to the Historical Perspectives* (Seoul: Sogang University Press, 1983), 8-15.

its ruling class; the lives of the people (commoner) and their culture were almost totally neglected. It was only later, when Koreans were forced to accept a colonial history from the Japanese while under the latter's occupation, that a national movement arose. This nationalism confronted the colonialistic view of history.²

However, the historical cognition of the Japanese was basically a history of the military and a history of political actions. Such was characteristic and expected from a militaristic government regime. The colonial history that we have inherited in Korea takes a similar stance; the Japanese approach clearly rubbed off on our historians, in so much that they adopted an understanding of Korean history that was based on politics. And this is also true for our nationalistic historians, to whom it was perfectly natural that, as they took a stand against the Japanese colonial history, they should focus on heroism, with heroes as political figures. Since then, new approaches have become influential. Among these we can point to historical materialism, new nationalistic history and historical positivism. Nonetheless, until the recent past, the historical cognition in Korean studies has spun round and round, always staying on the periphery of its concerns, without really overcoming either the Chinese or Japanese inspired approaches.

It is desirable to discuss the background and characteristics of the Korean historical cognition in order to point out the chronic deficiencies that such a politically centered history has: it has resulted in a historical understanding that is based on heroes and the ruling class, and which fosters an idealism of the past. We realize, however, that this historical understanding can represent a valid viewpoint from which to approach the past. But it allows no place for, and consequently cannot lead to understanding of, the life of the masses. And it is the masses which

² Sahak-kwa-kyosushil, ed. *Yoksa-ran Muot-inga* [What is the history?] (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1981), 70.

comprise the majority of our society. Therefore, the traditional Korean historical cognition must be considered awkward in the extreme, since it does not embrace the whole society, and because it draws a line between the minority ruling class and the masses.

My approach in this chapter is to try to understand history by looking at the development of the lives of the masses as a prime concern, while attempting to cast off the problems associated with the historical cognition that has up until now reigned supreme. Inevitably, we are confronted with the problem of *minjung* (people) as a useful term. This, since the early 1970s, has been discussed at length and has increasingly become a problematical issue. As a concept, it has not been generalized until now.³ Rather, each scholarly article has adopted a definition for the concept that is in line with the area of study with which each is concerned. But it is to be cherished that the problem of the concept involved in *minjung* has been prominent in recent study, and that throughout the academic world the specific social background of *minjung* should be considered. We should note that those who have been concerned with establishing the concept's identity have written within a frame of consciousness that is based on the present time, rather than an idealization of the past. However, their approach has not been devoid of difficulties: because a practical contemporary concern has been foremost, theoretical studies have been rare, and this has led to widespread confusion over the concept.⁴ Only recently have more theoretical accounts appeared, largely because the heated, popular discussion about *minjung* has now cooled down.

³ For references to concepts and scholarly areas, see Chae-chon Yu, *Minjung* (Seoul: Munhakgwa Chisong-sa, 1984), 12-54.

⁴ Ibid., 12.

Within the conception of *minjung* that has emerged is sorrow and grief on the part of the masses, since they were alienated from, and controlled by, the ruling class, while also being removed from historical accounts and ignored in the reality of their situation for a long time. The ill-feeling tends to cause antagonism towards the ruling class, and is exhibited in an inclination to see the whole problem and its resolution in terms of confrontation. The confrontation is perceived as a struggle of the *minjung* against the dominant ruling class. And the struggle continues endlessly. Now that there is a definite *minjung* concept understood widely by Koreans, so a self-righteous attitude pervades the struggle. However, the attitude of an individual who claims to stand on behalf of the *minjung*, the only, *minjung*, should not be tolerated. Ways of supporting *minjung* vary because the majority of the Korean people are *minjung*. But a self-righteous attitude distorts the *minjung* concept.

In my understanding, *minjung* has a broader meaning, and can be separated from attitudes such as those mentioned above: *minjung* are those members of Korean society who are in the majority. *Minjung* therefore consist of the controlled class (*peejibaecheung*), the working class (*saengsancheung*), and the common people (*suhmin*). From this point of view, *minjung* become a mainstream in history; the ruling class (*chibaecheung*) are subordinated to *minjung* because, even though they used their power to restrict the *minjung*, they always were subject to the continuing relationship with them. Rather than confrontation, this understanding of *minjung* may well be seen as a matter of compromise. But, such an ulterior motive is not included within the wider conception of *minjung* that I have adopted. A society consists of several social strata, each with their own elements, each of which has a specific function in relation to the whole, organic social structure. Therefore, our understanding of *minjung* has to see the context of

the masses' life within a social structure; *minjung*, as the masses, must be dynamic in respect to all other social strata.

Minjung history includes accounts that deal with such streams of social interaction by the masses. The aim of this chapter is to show how *minjung* have in the past used their wisdom and power to overcome the social limitations of their position and their inferior natural surroundings dynamically in relation to other social strata. I take as my theme an explanation of the characteristics of *minjung* culture: this includes the limitations of *minjung* culture. For this reason, I concentrate on conspicuous characteristics that consistently pervade the whole of *minjung*, rather than the dynamic development process.

It is not simple to define *minjung* culture; it is easy to misunderstand what it stands for. Consequently, those who regard *minjung* as a practical concept are likely to see the *minjung* culture as similar to the folk culture. But, the folk culture is the object of folklore, and can be understood in two different ways dependent on the branch of study.

British folklore has concentrated its efforts on studying the behavior of savages and tracing ancient practices which remain in vestigial form among the common people of civilized nation. In contrast, German *Volkskunde* tends to strongly emphasize the basis of German culture.⁵ It is therefore apparent that Korean *minjung* culture, when considered as an inclusive domain, is similar to the object of *Volkskunde*. However, the Korean view of folk practices and customs as inferior and backward is problematical.

Here, I define culture in a holistic way, akin to cultural anthropology. In other words, I identify culture with the totality of a human group's mode of

⁵ Tu-hyon Yi et al., eds. *Hankuk Minsokhak Kaesol* [Introduction to Korean folklore] (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1985), 65.

living.⁶ Therefore, *minjung* culture is the culture of work and play which comprise the main rhythm in the life of the *minjung*. And my concern is to elucidate the distinctive characteristics of that culture.

There is a problem of discontinuity that we must take account of. In Korea, this affects our traditional society and culture. Since its first contacts with the West, Korea has undergone rapid social change. This has involved the abrupt alteration of the social structure, of traditional cultural patterns, and of life styles (the rhythm of life), all of years of dynamic rule. The adoption of Western industrialization, rationalism and education patterns has been causative, although these were modeled under a totally different organic system: the Western constitutional norm.

Additionally, since the industrial revolution, the world has seen a rapid, rushing stream of historical change. Consequent to this, so-called primitive people no longer exist in the world; every country is attempting to adopt Westernization and industrialization by supplanting their own standards with those of the West.

It is vital to consider how Korean traditional *minjung* culture has changed under such circumstances when attempting to understand the characteristics of the culture today. Individual elements may well have become either altered or extinct. However, the intrinsic attributes of the culture, which crystallized and were maintained for thousands of years, are not the kinds of things that are easily changed. *Minjung* culture itself become the basis for adopting and assimilating Western theory in Korea. And the social structure today does not appear to have been transformed from that of the past dynastic period. So, we can say that, in spite of the social alterations that have occurred because of the Westernization

⁶ Sang-bok Han et al., *Munhwa Ilyuhak Kaeron* [Introduction to anthropology]. (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1985), 65.

process, *minjung* life, their work and play, are still maintained. Nonetheless, some features may have been transformed at their roots, and we must pay attention to these.

The Characteristics of *Minjung* Culture

Before examining the characteristics of *minjung* culture closely, I must single out the ubiquitous and most incessantly present features of the culture that exist both in the past and the present. As representative of this, the voluntary participation of the masses must necessarily be chosen. In relation to this, there is a record that attracts our eye in “*Dongyichuan*”, *Weizhi* in *Sanguozhi*. This is an account of ritual in Puyo called *yonggo*.⁷ This comprised a big meeting held in the first month of each year (January) as a “ceremony to heaven” (*chechon*),⁸ featuring singing, dancing, and feasting over several days, reckoned according to the lunar calendar. We can interpret this as a meeting of people who gathered throughout the country to present offerings to heaven while enjoying a festive mood for days without a break.

This kind of ritual, carried out by many country people at a specific time of the year, can also be found in Koguryo kingdom’s *tongmaeng* and Ye kingdom’s *muchun*.⁹ Records describe people in Ye and Chinhan gathering together to enjoy similar festivities, although in the later place it occurred after they had finished sowing rice plants. All of the accounts we have depict a widespread and

⁷ *Yonggo* (spirit-invoking drums) was a shamanistic ceremony, performed to invoke a god or spirit. Gi-baik Yi, *Hankuksa Shinlon* [New history of Korea] (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1976), 6.

⁸ *Chechon* (large festival) was a ceremony to heaven in Korean ancient society. See Young-oak Kim, *Yoja-ran Muot-inga* [What is woman?] (Seoul: Yangpyong, 1986), 218-20.

⁹ *Tongmaeng* was an ancestor worship ritual perhaps originating in a cult honoring the founder-king of Koguryo; *Muchun* (dance to heaven) was a form of heaven worship. See Gi-baik Yi, 6-8, 33-35.

characteristic feature of the Korean people at that time. Although the rituals were religious practices within ancient Korean shamanism, they show to what extent *minjung* enjoyed festival gatherings together.¹⁰

These traditions or similar equivalents continued during the Three Kingdom Period (up to 668 AD) with the *Hwarangdo*, through the *Yongdunghoe* and *Palkwanhoe*¹¹ in Koryo dynasty (918-1392), and the *sanchonje* (ceremony of the mountain and river) and *songhwangje* (ceremony of heaven) in Yi dynasty. They are also to be found in village rituals such as *tongje* (village ceremony) and *purakche* (village feast) that survive until today.¹² Apart from these specific festivals which exhibit shamanistic features, the annual customs (*seshi poongsok*) which have marked particular seasons since the olden times continue the tradition of play amongst the *minjung*; they are consequently fairly well structured to display the beauty (*mot*) and taste (*mat*) of the Korean masses. And, additionally, the peculiar habit of Korean entertainment style, in which they prepare a dinner table full of an abundance of food, and around which they sing and dance incessantly, has attracted considerable attention amongst foreigners, both inside and outside of Korea. It is apparent that age-old traditions of *yonil eumshik kamu* (everyday eating, drinking, singing and dancing) have continued to the present.

A feature that I perceive to be characteristic of Korean *minjung* culture is spirit possession (*shindullim*). Today, when one looks around the various churches

¹⁰ Tong-shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kujo* [History and structure of Korean shamanism] (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1975), 46-48.

¹¹ *Hwarangdo* (flower of youth bands) was the code of Silla chivalry. It had been the case with the communal assemblies of youth in earlier clan-centered society. The *hwarangdo* cultivated an ethos that served the needs of the state. *Yondunghoe* (festival of burning lamp) and *Palkwanhoe* (festival of the eight vows) were the Buddhist prayer ceremonies for the protection of the state. See Gi-baik Yi, 54-62, 122, 132-33, 149, 370.

¹² *Ibid.*, 92-97, 130-40, 171-85, 238-57.

and prayer meetings under many Christian banners, it is astonishing how the phenomena of experiencing the Holy Spirit (*songnyong chehom*) has caught fire.¹³ And, although there are many and varied religious experiences claimed absurd, by several hundred new religions (*shinhung chonggyo*) in Korea, the incidence of possession by a god remains so frequent that I cannot mention many specific examples here. Trance states, to be possessed by a spirit, can be witnessed virtually everyday at shaman ceremonies which take place at shrines within Seoul city. Further more, there are many types of spiritual guiders who have supposedly achieved spiritual enlightenment operating in the heart of the capital city. All of these are examples of spirit possession.

Tracing back through history, shaman ceremonies continue until we find ancient Koreans offering a ceremony (*kut*) to the heaven and earth. Again, on such occasions it is recorded that the *minjung* all gathered together and ate, drank and danced for days and nights on end. A similar case to what I am describing can be found in American Indians, and their so-called ghost dance. In that case, the group involved experience a mass trance from imbibing a hallucinogenic drug and take part in an intense and violent dance.¹⁴ The trance is considered to have resulted from possession by spirits. Following from this, it is not difficult to imagine a situation in Korea where the group of *minjung* would experience a similar mass trance after days of eating, singing, dancing and drinking. These, particularly since sacrificial ritual ceremonies were part of archaic Korean shamanism.¹⁵ In

¹³ The phenomenon of Holy Spirit possession, especially within the Sunbogun Chungang Church, is dealt with in various ways in David K. Suh, ed., *A Study on the Pentecostal Movement in Korea* (Seoul: Christian Academy, 1982), 23-99.

¹⁴ W. L. Barre, *The Ghost Dance: The Origins of Religion* (New York: Delta Books, 1972), 227-52; and Sang-bok Han, et al., 297-99.

¹⁵ Tong-shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kujo*, 57-60.

shamanism, the spiritual possession, and a *tangol* is a follower of the priest who is adept at meeting and entering spirits during ceremonies. Since ancient times we can see that shamanism has been a religious tradition that fulfilled the *minjung*'s spiritual need; hence it was widely believed amongst the *minjung*. And following from this, it is easy to see why spirit possession forms a characteristic of *minjung* culture.

Thus play and spirit possession, are two conspicuous characteristics of Korean *minjung* culture. The two are related, as they have been throughout the ages since the establishment of shamanism and the development of ceremonies (*kut*); both descend from the same root. Since their establishment, both features have developed their own characteristic and unique tradition as Korean society has gradually developed and become more specialized.

It is easy to misunderstand these two characteristics, and to present them as universal phenomena to be found throughout the world.

And Mircea Eliade interprets the identity of shamanism to be a "basic, original, elementary technique of ecstasy", which can exist in all cultures of humankind.¹⁶ The two characteristics, then, certainly do exist elsewhere. But, the two views cited above are only acceptable if we consider that play (*nori*) is a universal characteristic of humankind and if spiritual possession is allowed a mythological, theoretical interpretation. But here I am not dealing with such aspects of humankind's intrinsic nature, rather I regard it of significance that the two characteristic features have been maintained so strongly throughout the history of Korea as part of *minjung* culture. From this position of strength, we can see that the Korean *minjung* cultivated a much more varied and unique play

¹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask. (New York: Bollingen, 1964), 200.

culture than that witnessed amongst the masses in other countries. Again, while shamanism has been practiced in Siberia and elsewhere in the North-East Asia region, everywhere except Korea it has died out. Coupled to this the intensity and variety of spiritual possession in Korean shamanism has been widely reported and recognized by the world outside Korea. Therefore, it is possible to see spirit possession and play as two unique characteristics in Korean *minjung* culture. I will now look these two characteristics in greater detail.

Minjung's Play

First of all it is useful to look at features of play in order to clarify its characteristics more explicitly. Whenever in the past we referred to play (*nori*) we regarded it as folk play, treating it as part of our annual customs under the category of *minsok nori*, or further subdivided our categories into children's play (*ai nori*), adult's play (*orun nori*), games (*kyonggi*) and acrobatics (*kogye*).¹⁷ On the other hand, there is an insistence of some scholars to emphasize the creative transmission of folk plays by establishing their contemporary character.¹⁸ The former represents a plain descriptive approach, very much the folklorist's view, which regards the folk play as a remnant of our tradition culture, but the latter tries to imbue the play with a contemporary significance by interpreting it in some way. In either case, the results are limited because of the categorization within *minsok*.

Play has to be understood within the framework of the life of *minjung*, and therefore the restrictions imposed by labelling plays as *minsok* have to be

¹⁷ Sang-il Yi, *Hankuk-ui Kut-wa Nori* [Korean's *kut* and play] (Seoul: Munum-sa, 1981), 146-49.

¹⁸ Chae-hae Im, *Minsok Munhwaron* [Culture and folklore] (Seoul: Munhak-gwa Chisong-sa, 1986), 113-45.

removed. The *minjung* spend their life working to make a living. Within their cycle of life, rotating around the four seasons of a year, they have leisure time. And, behind their working activities, rather as a second side to their lives, the *minjung* have beliefs through which they seek an answer to the meaning of life. This is the total frame.

The *minjung* have cultivated and enjoyed play since times past during various activities and different parts of their lives. Therefore, it is appropriate to explore the worlds of play used in different activities: during work, leisure and religious activities.

There are several points that need to be clarified before we begin to contrast work and play as two distinct concepts. Although the contrast is apparent from our current perspective, the idea of work as we have it in respect to industrial labor today is not helpful in understanding the world of work for the *minjung* in the past. This view is not logical at all. And the supposed tie-up between leisure and play, which suggests they are unproductive and, as a consequence, lacking in virtue, represents an attitude from the rulers of the Middle ages, who blamed the workers for all ills and relied heavily on a feudalistic system for their support, stating a moral code that would enforce their view.¹⁹ From their view, the idea of play as a concept that contrasts with work schematizes the *minjung*'s situation as the exploited masses, being pushed beyond tolerance. There is no way to prevent such a view being exploited, but the ruling class was not so blind that they could not see the value of play in a productive sense, and the *minjung* would have shared the same view of play's productivity. It is, at the least, unfortunate if we do not have a minimum understanding of traditional society as it was in the past.

¹⁹ See Sang-il Yi, 161; and Chae-hae Im, 114.

Folk-songs (*minyo*: people's songs) express the function of play within work very well. Folk-songs were the song sung by the *minjung* in the place of their work. They were sung while working, and they accompanied some movement, perhaps some dance. They made the work seem more tolerable, and allowed the people to keep working rhythmically.²⁰ In a very similar way, perhaps *poongmul*²¹ is played for communal labor team (*dure*). Accepting that play can be found within work, we can state that it has a place beyond the working place in other kinds of work that the *minjung* have participated in. For example, at a funeral, the pallbearers gather in the house of the deceased. There they tend to feast, drink, and play or sing funeral songs well into the night.

Secondly, play in leisure time includes all those types of play that have nothing to do with work activities. However, leisure cannot be differentiated clearly from work activities amongst the *minjung* of the past, as we can do so today, since the masses were not allowed time in which to enjoy leisure. The rhythm of life has always centered around the annual cycle of agriculture. During their dynastic past, the national economy was based on farming activities. Within this annual cycle, there was always time for the *minjung* to escape from work activities for a single day or for certain periods of the year. Again, this broke up the rhythmic cycle of life, which was clearly based around work. During such time off, the *minjung* used play, and it is such playing that we identify with annual customs. Here, plays normally took place as a group activity, the group being similar to that of work.

²⁰ See Tu-hyon Yi et al., 338, where the folk-song in the labor function is explained.

²¹ *Poongmul* means scenery but it refers farmers' instrumental music. The instrument names are *soe*, *changgu*, *puk* and *jing*. See Hyun-sun Kim, *What is the Poongmul-nori?* (Seoul: Kuiyin-sa, 1988), 19-24.

Examples of play during this leisure time include fireworks (*chwibul nori*), tug of war (*chultarigi*), kite flying (*yon nalligi*), a stick game (*yut nori*), and spinning tops (*paengyii chigi*) accompanying the fifteenth day of the first lunar month; swinging (*kuenetagi*) and wrestling (*sireum*) on the *tano* day in May; *chongyu* during the sixth lunar month; cow play (*so nori*) during the eighth lunar month. The games were numerous. Consequently, when we look at the complete list of annual customs (*seshi poongsok*), it gives us the illusion that the *minjung* had sufficient time to over-indulge in play.²² Despite the restrictions imposed by the strictly segregated society, and the poverty caused by their low position within the social structure, *minjung* were able both to enjoy their lives and to spruce up the cycle by breaking always for leisure activities.²³

If we consider work and play to encompass the real world of life, then religious belief pursues the ideals. While we tend to think of religion as the sacred and transcendent, the beliefs of the *minjung* were very different. Shamanism represents their spiritual belief system, and *kut* (ritual) their practice of it. *Kut* is often called *kut nori*, and is expressed as being played (*kut-ul nonda*). In a *kut* performance, other customers of the shaman, and neighbors, all assemble together and join in a round of playing for their enjoyment.²⁴ The features of play within religious practices can be clearly seen. Village ritual (*maulje*) which comprise part of the shamanistic system of the *minjung*, involve various play activities; the villagers involved get wrapped up in the festive mood. Earlier, citing the prevailing during the Koryo period, I demonstrated that shamanism is of long

²² Sang-il Yi, 148.

²³ Ibid., 171-72.

²⁴ Ibid., 173.

standing in Korea, and that the tradition has continued until the present time. *Palgwanhoe* can be categorized as Buddhist in respect to its name, but it incorporated many types of play and also comprised a feast with *umju kamu* (eating, drinking, singing and dancing). It was also a national religious festival, and thus can be said to have succeeded the ancient forms of shamanistic ceremonies.

Following from these examples, it can be seen that the plays of Korean *minjung* are not confined within a concept that contrasts and makes a clear division between work and leisure. Play has become part of the rhythm of life on the part of Korean *minjung*. They have worked together, and enjoyed play within their leisure time and within religious activities, and therefore play itself has become an expression of their life. It has therefore become part of their physiology; it may even be acceptable to regard play as the *minjung*'s breathing.

The entire repertoire of plays have these same characteristics, and each also has varied function in its practice at a particular time or for a particular activity. I would like to classify them as: *shimshin tallyon*, to train one's body and mind, *kongdongchae kyolsok*, to bind people together with a communal solidarity, *sahoe inshik kanghwa*, to strengthen social consciousness, *shinmyong naerim*, spirit possession, and *chohwa-ui hoebok*, the restoration of harmony. It is therefore natural that play should discipline the body and soul of youths and strengthen and stretch the arthritic physical and spiritual bodies of adults. Play functions like gymnastic sports. Play works by separating a group into sides who, by creating partnerships, learn the need for community and strengthen their solidarity.

Play also incorporates the satirization of social inequalities, in which it can report and comment on the absurdities of the social system. Thus, *minjung* social consciousness is raised through play. As an example, we can cite Korean mask-

dance drama (*t'alch'um*). Many plays also include the constant repetition of particular rhythmic patterns, which allows enthusiasm (*hung*) to develop amongst participants. *Hung* enables *minjung* to reach a stage of consciousness where they experience separation from self. This, often, results in spirit possession (*shinmyong*). In a nutshell, play is something that people get enthusiastic about.

Play ends with harmony. This is not a static state that allows all participants to be united evenly in a common achievement. Rather, the reality of *minjung* is shown in play to be a continuous succession of troubles and problematic situations. The troubles which are experienced are adjusted until they become harmonic, through the various functions of the *nori madang*, the place of the play. The harmony that is reached is dynamic, and so we may regard all the functions of play as steps towards reaching final harmony. Consequently, I consider play to correspond with the pursuit of harmony from every point of view.

As the country underwent Western industrialization and modernization, so the play of *minjung* was forced to change under an assortment of ordeals. First, the Japanese colonial power suspended all big scale play activities since they were afraid of mass meetings by the controlled Koreans.²⁵ Then, after the liberation, the Korean society moved more and more rapidly toward industrialization. This constricted society, as if every member was part of an onward grinding machine. The effect was enhanced by education. As a result, play become associated with wasteful leisure, contrasting with productive labor activities. The space for play activities in the life cycle has declined and play has become popular as a product that can be bought and sold: it has become a commercial activity.

²⁵ Chae-hae Im, 115-16, refers to this period as a period of play suppression.

As a natural result of this change the mask-dance drama movement in universities has emerged since the early 1970s. We can see in this an unconscious re-awakening of the desire to revive traditional celebrations by the youth. Because the reality has not allowed dance a proper, single space of time, the movement has not been able to burst into bloom.²⁶ The *minjung*'s traditional play culture, due to its fundamental nature, is not the kind of thing that can disappear suddenly.

Minjung's Spiritual Background

Spirit possession (*shindullim*) refers to the state where a spirit descends into the body. *Shinnaerim* or *kangshin*²⁷ has similar meaning, and *chupshin* comprise appropriate Sino-Korean characters. These terms are used in two contexts: while in one the term refers to the descent of a spirit as possession of a person during a shamanistic ceremony (*kut*), in the other it has a broader public meaning that may also acknowledge a similar possession situation. Here, since my concern is with *minjung* culture, I equate spirit possession with its broader meaning.

To understand what this concept entails, it is necessary to have some understanding about shamanism. This is because shamanism lies at the root of spirit possession consciousness. Korean shamanism exists within the co-ordinates of a wide shamanistic area, spanning Central and East Asia. In each place, belief dates from the very distant past. The evolutionary approach, that regards shamanism as a primitive religion wherein worship is concerned with spirits who previously existed in the world and with totems, can here be ignored.

²⁶ Hui-wan Chae, *Kongdongch'e-ui Chumshinmyong-ui Chum* [Shinmyong in the community dance] (Seoul: Hangil-sa, 1985), 3.

²⁷ *Shinnaerim* or *kangshin* means to be risen in spirit.

Because the religious phenomena themselves are regarded as of prime import, it is dangerous to make assumptions based on particular value systems (such as our own present day one). Anyhow, some changes must have occurred in shamanism due to the emergence of ancient state in particular areas. Initially, China, Korea and Japan all developed their religious practices within the frame of shamanism. But, according to the flow of history, shamanism in China was absorbed into Taoism, and in Japan into Shintoism. In Korea, contrasting these, shamanism absorbed Taoism and other religions until it reached its present state. In other areas of Asia, shamanism continued without great change until, in the process of forced communization at the start of the present century, it became virtually extinct. Therefore, Korea is the only place where shamanism has kept its ancient forms and continues to be practiced.²⁸

The priest of shamanism is called *mudang*. *Mudang* carried out duties as priest, judge, curer of diseases, prophet, performer of sacrifices and as head of the military. At least, this was the situation originally, when religion and state were not separated. But when states were established as nations, so shamans were forced to specialize, as the sovereign power was reinforced. Due to this, whenever it happened, one side of shamanism became subject to the state, and the other side remained in the rural populace at the village level, catering to the religious needs of the *minjung*. Shamanism within the former category existed until the end of the Yi dynasty as a state shaman (*kungmu*), but those in the latter can be found in the countryside until today. Between them, shamans carried out state rituals and village rituals, spending much of their time carrying out fortune telling with a

²⁸ Hung-youn Cho, "Mu Yongue Taehayo" [An essay about the study of shamanism] *Journal of Korean Studies*, (1984): 223-56.

variety of talisman as well as sacrificial services (*cheesung*) and the more common *kut*. Their customers were largely referred to as *tangol*.

From its inception, various particular gods have featured in the shamanistic canon. To this new gods have been added. This gives Korean shamanism a unique canon, although several of its gods are believed to reside in particular households and are therefore worshipped in the houses of believers. Compared to the terms used in Christianity, the worship of these latter gods is rather like a family service.

The religious belief system of shamanism has often been poorly classified in the past, either by considering it a village religion or by allying it to household spirit.²⁹ There are many classificatory mistakes; confusion is caused by considering shamanism as part of folklore rather than as a religion. But, as a religion, shamanism can be said to consist of transcendental beings, *tangol* as people who worship them, and shamanism who act as intermediaries between the two.

A candidate to become a shaman is afflicted with a so-called spirit illness (*shinbyong*) that signifies the god's call. The person is reborn as a shaman only after accepting the call in an initiation rite (*naerim kut*) and, as this is performed, it is believed that the god descends and becomes master of the shaman's body. Signs of its presence are found in spiritual virtue and apparent miracle-working by the shaman. Thus the shaman becomes a master of spirit possession and is able to give messages from the god world to customers during each section of *kut*. The customers, *tangol*, therefore gain experiences of meeting gods at *kut* due to the shaman's mediation. Consequently, we can say that shamanism is largely based on spirit possession.

²⁹ For example, See Tu-hyon Yi et al., 155-209; and Tae-gon Kim, *Hankuk Mingan-shinang Yongu* [Study of Korean folk religion] (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1983), 50-284.

Taking the historical background and characteristics of Korean shamanism together, it is not difficult to appreciate the extent to which it has influenced the establishment of *minjung* culture. The phases in the development of the latter have already been outlined, and in order they are: spiritual possession that has continued from the past to the present in shamanism; various kinds of possession that are boasted about in new religions and by the so-called *dosa* (enlightened); the achievement of possession states during work and play by the *minjung* themselves;³⁰ the widespread Holy Spirit possession states found in Christian churches. In addition to this, we can state that apart from their religious foundations, religion in Korea stands for spiritual enlightenment (*do-tong*) or spiritual realization (*kkaedarum*). These are religious experiences, a term which in itself stands for an intense state that symbolizes eternal existence.

It is not possible to understand the characteristics of spirit possession fully when it is considered only of religious experience. Possession does not just occur within the contexts of religion, and there appear to be frequent solicitations by the *minjung* to achieve such a state in more mundane activities. In the new religions, believers reach a state of possession through their search for the truth, which often involves wandering the country according to what they may perceive as their sense of duty; or, it may result from carrying out some sacrificial rite or training exercise.

Contrasting this, a shamanistic *kut* does not happen suddenly. The *tangol* involved will attempt to resolve a problem where it occurs on their own. Only if

³⁰ *Shinmyong* is another name for *shilyong* (god). But there is a tendency in Korea to understand it as similar to *shin'gi*, meaning "godlike vigor." An example is in the phrase, *shinmyong nanuen il*, an occasion to "get into the spirit of." Yol-gyu Kim misunderstands *shinmyong* as "ecstasy" or "orgiac state." See Yol-gyu Kim. "Shamanistic Belief and Folklore of Korea," in *Studies of Korean Shamanism*, ed. In-hoi Kim (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1982), 63.

they fail will they seek recourse with a shaman. They might attempt to find the cause of the problem and seek some form of prescription for its resolution. The most heavy prescription comprises a *kut*; a *kut* is only held if a *tangol* is unsuccessful at resolving a problem on their own. Consequently, the way that *minjung* experience possession states through a *kut* marks the high point of shamanist religion: it occurs only after long attempts to solve malaise. Therefore, possession states within high forms of religion, such as Holy Spirit possession, are of a similar nature.

It is not acceptable to view shamanism as a religion, and it is better view it as a “sub-religion”.³¹ This view stems from those who wanted to attack shamanism, and who saw such spiritual experiences within the Christian church as a kind of shamanism.³² Thus, the notion of praying for good fortune has remained as the stage of low religions, and is thought to need to be sublimated by doctrine in the great religions. Such a view is not valid today: although such a distinction is still used to identify low from high religions, it only has a place in museums. After all, is there any religion that does not look for blessings? It is very puerile to criticize and evaluate any religion based on standards found in another. Even so, spirit possession does not only seek blessing; we have already seen this, and it is clearly contrary to the essence of possession.

The most traditional and essential aspects of spirit possession are evidenced in shamanism. Here, the *kut*, which in itself offers a solution to the customer’s problem, is the aspect where possession is most representatively found. The

³¹ Sang-hui Moon, *Chonggyo-ran Muot-inga* [What is the religion?] (Seoul: Pundo, 1975), 183-84.

³² Sang-hui Moon, “An Influence of Shamanism on the Contemporary Korean Society,” in *Shamanism, Its Present Meaning*, ed. Minsokhak Yonguso (Iri: Wonkwang University Press, 1973), 118.

problem of the customer needs to be understood in a rather wider frame work than as, for example, a physical malaise. The reality of *minjung*'s life is not naturally harmonious. When non-harmonious elements gain the upper hand, then the consciousness of a problem arises. It can also happen as the inverse, so that when there is no trouble, the consciousness of a problem based on the lack of harmony can evolve. Within the latter, we can see ancient rituals to heaven and contemporary rituals for good luck. These are regular activities that prevent the breakdown of harmony. Rituals therefore have as their ideal the restoration or continuation of harmony.³³ This can be identified in ritual structure; hence a ritual begins with preparation, where the ceremonial place is purified, ghosts and spirits are chased away and ancestor and shaman's gods are called on. It then proceeds to a set of sections (*kori*) where particular gods are called, served, and asked for messages which are transmitted through the shaman.³⁴ Then, towards the concluding section, ghosts and spirits are in turn entertained, served, and sent away. The structure appeals the relish (*mut*), both overall, and in each enclosed section. First, a god is received, and then entertained with drink, music and dance. A message from the god is sought, the god is worshipped once more as a token of gratitude, and finally sent away. The ritual, therefore, has at its center *kongsu*, a section for messages from the gods. It harmonizes together shaman, spirit and customer, and since it is carefully structured perpendicularly and horizontally, it is

³³ Hung-yong Cho, "Mu-nun Chonggyo Hyonsang" [Shamanism is a religious phenomenon], *Munhak Sasang*, no. 170 (1986): 151-59.

³⁴ Tong-shik Ryu and Jung-young Lee take the view that the proceeding of *Kori kwajang* exhibit a perfect structure according to their characteristics and the twelve *kori* might symbolize the twelve months of the years. See Tong-shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kijo*, 296 and 318; and Jung-young Yi, *Korean Shamanistic Rituals* (Paris: Mouton, 1981), 153-60. But *kut* has, in fact, more *kori*, and their order is not exactly consistent. See Chu-gun Chang and Kil-song Choe, *Kyonggi-do-chiyk Musok Yangju-gun Munyo Cho Yong-ja Pyon* [A woman shaman, Yang-ja Cho in Yangju, Kyunggi province] (Seoul: Munhwajae Kwalliguk, 1967), 139-51.

able to satisfactorily resolve the problem. Harmony notably appears in the character of spirits called on in *kut*. The transcendental nature of shaman divides into proper gods (*chongshin*), ancestors, and ghosts and spirits. The latter comprise a lower realm, and are further categorized according to their character.³⁵ In Korean shamanism, four generations of ancestors, on both sides of the family, are venerated. Apart from these, proper gods include shamanistic ancestors (*mujo*), the hero god (*yongungshin*), a spirit of nature (*chayonshin*), and alien spirits (*waeraeshin*). These show the characteristic of ancestor gods but are considered to protect Korea and give its people virtue. The gods of taoism and Buddhism are regarded as the same to these within the shamanist doctrine, and these are our ancestors, at least in the broad meaning of the term. Spirits and ghosts also share similar identity since they are also deceased people. All gods in Korea shamanism, then, comprise ancestors, and so we can see that the concept of god is inclusive and harmonious. Spirit possession ceases to imply blessing; rather it becomes a dynamic principle for harmonizing the life of *minjung*.

Recapitulation

I have discussed play and spirit possession as two characteristics of Korean *minjung* culture. The two are reciprocal and mutually supporting. Thus we find spirit possession within play and play within *kut*, particularly within the *chinogwi kut*. The latter is held to lead the soul of a deceased to heaven, but it is not appropriate to think of it as a ritual that is sad and grave. Of course, such sentiments, and sorrows and tears, well up during the ritual. But entertainment also exists, with the household of the deceased played a role. All are joyfully

³⁵ Hung-yong Cho, "A Collection of the Korean Ghosts and Spirits," *Munhwa Yesul* 12, no. 102 (1985): 37-43.

entertained as the shaman plays with messengers from the other world. *Chinogwi*, then, is a play within the corpus of spiritual possession that amalgamates the joys, sorrows, griefs and pleasures of the *minjung*.

Elements of sorrow and joy comprise a balance of *yin (um)* and *yang*, shaping the frame of *taeguk*, the great absolute in completion (*wonyung*). Therefore, the act of playing imparts realization. Consequently, *minjung* culture can be placed within a mold of completeness and therefore harmony. Throughout Korean history it has flowed ceaselessly as *pungryu chongshin*, the refined arts.³⁶

However, problems, continuity appeared after the liberation as our country pursued industrialization and Westernization. The problem has at its root the desire for specialization of skills and differentiation of lifestyles in the new social order. Accordingly, the two characteristics of play and possession within *minjung* culture are now misunderstood. Now, possession is used narrowly to define a state that can be tested for genuineness or a state of possession. Other aspects that surround it, such as the situation that leads to possession amongst the *minjung*, are ignored. Thus, little attempt has been made to understand the total experience of possession, the essence of which is found in the contexts of possession within *minjung* culture. Similarly, harmony is considered as a static state, allied to traditions passed down from the past.

Differentiation and specialization are features of their present times, pursued as an ideology that promotes professionalism. This, in itself, is likely to have influenced the characteristics of *minjung* culture and their perceptions of the *minjung*. There are many cases where Koreans reach a stage of realization through spiritual possession, and these we often regard as a professional exercise. But it is

³⁶ Tong-shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kujo*, 82-93.

hardly true professionalism, since not all of those involved can be considered specialists. Possession is a broad state in that it embraces many people. Here we have a professionalism that is not professional. In short, professionalism demands that no obstacle can be insurmountable in an effort to reach a conclusion; many examples of this type of things exist within the life and work of the *minjung*.

We should not continue in the same way, to judge *minjung* according to the standards of other people (the standards of the West). In their play and possession, *minjung* have resolved all their problems to restore harmony using a “professionalism that is not professional.” Through this, they have coped with the pressures caused by foreign invasions, and coped with the absurdities and abnormalities occurring internally through each period of history. Today’s situation, particularly the rushing stream of industrialization and Westernization coupled to its resultant conflicts, is only transitional. At such a time, it is important to revive our understanding of the characteristics of Korean *minjung* culture, its power and sagacity. But, perhaps not; maybe our current problems will be resolved before we can restore the harmonious and unifying tradition of our *minjung* culture. This is already clearly happening throughout our country.

CHAPTER 3

The Korean Shamanist Ritual (*Kut*)

Introduction

Since long before the advent of Confucianism and Buddhism, religious rites oriented in nature have been performed in Korea. These rituals are known as *kut* in Korean, a word widely used, according to scholars of Korean folklore, in the Yakut language.¹ In Korean, the word denotes not only religious rituals oriented in nature but frequently refers to the music, dance, and drama integrated into those rituals, and many theatricals have stemmed from the music, dance and drama of religious rituals. Therefore, a *kut* could be characterized as “musico-dramatic ritual.”²

Folk religious rites, apart from Confucian and Buddhist rites, have many forms, depending upon the inclination of the master of the rite, the occasion for the rite, and the scale of the rite. The master of the folk rite could be either a *mudang*,³ or shaman, performing song and dance in a large-scale ritual or could be a professional chanter chanting scriptures, as in Taoism or Buddhism, or a fortune-teller, or a court sorcerer. In each case, the form of the ritual varies, but, in general, each entails nature-oriented religious rites accompanied by song and dance.

¹ Halla P. Huhm, *Kut: Korean Shamanist Ritual* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Hollym, 1980), 9-11.

² Ellen Koskoff, “Both In and Between: Women’s Musical Roles in Ritual Life,” in *Music and the Experience of God*, eds. David Power, Mary Collins, and Mellonee Burnim (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1989), 88.

³ For the sake of clarity, the Korean word *mudang* is referred to as a shaman in this study.

Although the Korean word *mudang* is often translated as shaman, some Korean scholars claim that the Korean *mudang* has many characteristics that differ from those of the Siberian shaman.⁴ Scholars of Korean shamanism carefully avoid the term religion in defining the *mudang* phenomenon. In Korea, they call it “customs of *mudang*”; not “*kyo*” (religious teaching) but “*sok*” (custom). And *musok*, or the customs of *mudang* may be defined as “a form of people’s faith in traditional religious phenomenon centered around the *mudang*.” When scholars call this religious phenomenon “customs of *mudang*,” they contrast it with religion, which has teachings and doctrines. They want to call it “people’s faith,” or “folk beliefs.”⁵ Therefore, they maintain, *mudang* should not be translated as “shaman,” nor should Korean *kut* be described as shamanistic rites.

Mudang throughout Korea have adhered to a similar faith, but there are regional variations in their characteristics and ritual forms. Some scholars therefore classify *mudang* into three types: the South Korean, the North Korean, and the Eastern Seaboard.⁶

The Characteristics of Shamans

Those who perform the so-called greater *kut* are commonly referred to as shamans, but the specific name by which each is known varies according to the region. In Northern Korea, a female shaman is called *mansin* and a male shaman is called *mugyok* or *paksu*. In the Hamgyong provinces, a female shaman is referred

⁴ Tong-shik Ryu, *The Christian Faith Encounters the Religions of Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1965), 15-18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁶ Tae-gon Kim, “Regional Distinction of Korean Shamanism,” in *The Studies of Korean Shamanism*, ed. In-hoi Kim (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1982), 34-55.

to as *osimi* band a *mugyok* as *tosaebi*. In the southern region of Korea the name used for shaman is *tahngollae*, and on Cheju Island it is *simbang*. In the Eastern seaboard region, shamans are simply called *mudang*.⁷

In the Northern part of Korea, most shamans become professionals when the spirit appears in them, regardless of sex or age. In most cases, this happens between the ages of ten and thirty. When the spirits dwell, the recipient suffers from an indeterminable ailment, behaves oddly, and divines things at the prompting of the spirits. With the performing of a ceremony, the recipient, by now recovered from the illness, becomes a shaman.⁸

The initiatory sickness represents death, implying the return to the chaotic world before creation. This chaos, however, is not a simple chaos but a chaos brooding the potential of the creation. The initiatory sickness, despite its interconnection with the chaos, alludes to the dialectic of the sacred and the secular, since this chaotic state of the sickness gives a new birth to the old-self.⁹

Tong-shik Ryu stresses the primacy of self-denial over new birth and chaos over Creation.

The assistant shamans, or *kidaes*, who beat double-headed drums, play accompanying music, sing in alternation with the shaman, are in most cases female, but occasionally there are males among them. *Kidae* are mostly those in whom the spirits have not appeared.

⁷ Lucy Hwang, *Korean Kut and Mudang* (Seoul: Mooneum-sha, 1988), 21-25.

⁸ Ibid., 29-30; Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, 27-31; and Richard W.L. Guisso, and Chai-shin Yu, eds., *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 122-23, 162, 175.

⁹ Tong-shik Ryu, *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kujo*, 288.

The person in whom the spirits have appeared goes to visit a recognized shaman, enters into a foster parent-child relationship, and studies the *kut* craft. The foster parent is called the spiritual mother and the apprentice the spiritual daughter. The apprentice, having mastered the *kut* craft, builds an altar, usually in one of the rooms of her home, installs an image of the spirits, places the *kut* tools, and offers supplications and prayers morning and evening.¹⁰

In the Southern region of Korea, the greater *kut* is performed by hereditary female shamans. In principle, the females of a shaman's family studies the *kut* craft, while the males engage in playing the music that accompanies the *kut* and in theatricals for the general public. Such hereditary families intermarry, and the bride learns the *kut* craft from her mother-in-law. Thus, in southern Korea the shamans performing greater *kut* are hereditary and do not go through the process of having the spirits appear in them.

Even in the southern region, however, there are some *kut*-performing shamans who have had the spirits appear in them. They are not hereditary, and the *kut* they perform are very primitive and unlike those performed by hereditary shamans. Their profession predominantly is fortune-telling rather than performing *kut*.

On Cheju Island there are both male and female shamans, and there are both hereditary shamans and others who have become shamans by having the spirits appear in them. Moreover, there are some who have become shamans voluntarily through training.

In every region there are those who perform greater *kut* with song and dance, those who chant scriptures, and those who are engaged in fortune-telling.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

Originally, a family would go to a fortune-teller to find out about a certain worrisome thing in the family, or to determine whether certain family rites would be necessary, and depending upon the determination of the fortune-teller, would have a *kut* performed or scriptures chanted. Thus, originally the *kut*-performer, fortune-teller, and scripture-chanter had separate and distinct functions, but the distinctions gradually disappeared so that today their functions overlap.¹¹

The Varieties of the *Kut*

Kut, or traditional nature-oriented religious rites, is classified according to scale as *pison*, *p'udakkori*, or greater *kut*.¹² *Pison* is performed in a very short period of time and can be performed by ordinary females other than shamans. *P'udakkori* is performed by either a shaman or a fortune-teller and requires three or four hours, the performer personally playing musical instruments and chanting songs in a recitation tone. Greater *Kut* is performed by shamans with musicians playing a variety of instruments while the shaman performs songs and dances. A greater *kut* usually lasts from one to several days. There are various kind of greater *kut*, depending upon the objective and the occasion, but the predominant forms are family rites for the peace and health of the family, ward rites for the peace and health of the inhabitants of a neighborhood, and memorial services for the dead.

Among the many other types of *kut* are the *sin kut* for the spirits worshipped by the shamans, the *sonnim kut* for the god of children's measles, and the *yongwang kut* for the dragon god.

¹¹ Ibid., 14-20.

¹² See Yun-shik Chang, "Shamanism as Folk Existentialism," in *Religion in Korea: Beliefs and Cultural Values*, eds. Earl H. Phillips and Eui-young Yu (Los Angeles: California State University, 1982), 25-44; and Alan C. Covell, *Ecstasy: Shamanism in Korea* (Seoul: Hollym, 1983), 18-25.

Family rites for the peace and health of the household are known by different names in different areas. Names is use in Seoul are *chongsin* or *chongsin kut*, *kkotmaji kut* in Spring; *immaji kut* in Summer; *singokmaji kut* in autumn; *sibaesari kut* in Winter. In the Pyongan provinces, these rites are called *chongsin kut*, *maji kut*, *shiwang kut*. Names used in the Hamgyong provinces are *antaek kut* and *chaesu kut*. In the cholla provinces, there are *tosin kut* and *cholgi kut*, and in Kyongsang provinces, *kasil saenggi kut*. All of these are rituals of worshipping the good god of the family, praying for the prosperity of the children, and repelling all misfortunes. Among the family rites are those praying for the prosperity of the family business when the family moves to a new location or begins a new fish breeding farm, and praying for the elimination of such misfortunes as the illness of a family member, destruction of the house by fire, or bad luck in the family business.¹³

The ward rites for the peace and health of the inhabitants of a neighborhood involve praying to the guardian god for the good luck, peace, and health of the inhabitants. These rites are known by many names, including *todang kut*, *tang kut*, *teadong kut*, and *sohwang kut*.

Memorial services for the dead also are known by different names in different regions: in Seoul, *chinogwi kut*, *chiogwi saenam kut*; in the Pyongan and Hwanghae provinces, *siwang kut*, *kilmi kut*; in the Hamgyong provinces *mangmugi kut*; in the Cholla and Chungchong provinces, *sittkuem kut* ; in the Eastern seaboard region of Kangwon province, *ogu kut*; on Cheju Island, *siwang maji kut*.

¹³ Lucy Hwang, 12.

Memorial services are dedicated to the soul of the dead, to send the soul off to the other world, posthumously relieving the dead of grievances. In this category of *kut* are those performed right after death, those performed long after death, and those dedicated to the soul of one who died away from home or in an accident. There is also the *chinogwi kut* dedicated to the soul of an unmarried boy or girl who has died. There is a *kut* marrying the soul of the dead, known as *honnyong kut*. Among many others, there are also *kut* praying beforehand for a living person to pass into Nirvana and *kut* praying for a person suffering from a long illness.

A greater *kut* necessarily consists of a variety of *kori*. *Kori* in this context refers to a variety of *kut*, differing from region to region but in most areas refer to *chosang kut* and *chesok kut*, though in Seoul refer to *chosang kori* and in North Cholla province to *chosang sok* and *chesok sok*.

Most lesser *kut* is performed in the name of the god invoked on each occasion, i.e., when the guardian god is invoked, it is known as *songju kut*, *songju kori* or *songju sok*, and when the *chesok* god is involved as *chesok kut*, *chesok kori*, or *chesok sok*. The kind of god invoked in this connection varies slightly, depending on whether it is a family rite, ward rite, or memorial service. There are also regional differences even among the same kinds of rites. Among the most frequently invoked gods are: *chesok sin* (harvest god), *chilsong sin* (god of the seven stars of the Big Dipper), *changgun sin* (god of generals), *kunnung sin* (god of hero generals), *sinjang sin* (god of general of divine ability), *taegam sin* (guardian god of the site of a house), *hogwi sin* (god of Manchurian barbarians), *songhwang sin* (village god), *sang sin* (mountain god), *yong sin* (dragon god), *chonha taesin* (great sky god), and *chiha taesin* (great underworld god). these gods have the duty of taking charge of space, the earth, and human beings and,

depending upon the prayers offered, bestowing the blessings of good luck, children, peace, and longevity.¹⁴

The Formation of the *Kut*

First, ceremonial tables dedicated to the god, along with a variety of flowers and shaman tools, are set in place on the wooden floor of the hall in which the *kut* is performed. In the case of family rites, the tables are set in a corner of the house or the yard. In the case of ward rites, they are set in the ward shrine or on a plaza of the neighborhood. In accordance with the *kut* program, the shaman sings in front of the tables, and performs shaman dances and variety of other acts. Musicians, sitting close by, play accompanying music.

A number of lesser *kut* are not referred to by the name of the god invoked. These are usually called by a name indicative of the ritual as a preceding part of the program of the great *kut* to follow. In most cases a great *kut* is preceded by a *pujung kori*, or purification rite for the site of the *kut*.

Many lesser *kut* or *kori* in which prayers are offered and a certain god invoked are performed according to a standard program that, nevertheless, may vary, depending upon the kind of *kut* performed. According to professor Yim Sok-chae the program of the great *kut* consists of the following:

- (1) Report of the name and rank of the suppliant
- (2) Narration of the material and spiritual devotion of the suppliant to the performance of the rituals
- (3) Narration of the process in which the offerings were made and prayer for the god's acceptance of the feast
- (4) Narration of prayer for blessings and elimination of all misfortunes in the forthcoming year
- (5) Narration of the mythology of the god being invoked

¹⁴ Huhm, 11-15.

- (6) Narration via *t'aryong* (a ballad), dance, jugglery, talent show designed to please the invoked god
- (7) Narration of jubilation for having achieved aspirations by the grace of the invoked god
- (8) Narration of offering food for the assorted demons, accompanied by the following in some regions
- (9) Opening song for a lesser *kut*
- (10) Concluding song for lesser *kut*
- (11) Words of the invoked god to human beings
- (12) Narration of the god's will by divination
- (13) Narration of sending back the invoked god¹⁵

Lesser *kut* in which the name of a god is not invoked are performed in most cases in a theatrical way as the opening process of the great *kut*. Among such lesser *kut* are: the *pujong kori*, designed to purify the hall of the greater *kut*; the *nokkoji kut*, for relieving people of grievances; the *chinogwi kut*, for paving the road to the other world; the *kop'uri* for helping the dead who have not reached the other world; *myonggarugi*, in which the shaman advances bodily, marking every step; *taejabi*, in which people, shaking a long, curved stick, usher in the Heavenly God into the hall of the *kut*; and the *tungnori* and *kkonnori*.

Every greater *kut*, after sending back the invoked god at the end, is followed by a lesser *kut* designed to placate the assorted gathered demons by inviting them to partake of the offerings. This lesser *kut* is called *twetchon*, *chungch'onmaeggi*, or *kori kut*.

Ceremonial Tables and Offerings

The site as which the *kut* tables and various kind of shaman tools are set for the performance of the ritual is called *kut-chung*, or *kut* hall. A shrine, the house of the sponsoring family, or a plaza may be used for this. At the *kut-chung* are set

¹⁵ Ibid., 14.

different kinds of tables along with paper flowers, candles, an incense burner, ceremonial utensils, and shamanistic tools, depending upon the god to be invoked and the specific functions of the particular *kut*. According to the god being invoked, the shaman may use a variety of costumes and, either standing or sitting, sings or dances in tune with the accompanying music while facing the *kut* tables or the *kidae*. The costumes of the shaman vary according to the kind of *kut* to be performed and according to the region. In the central region, including the Seoul area, a large variety of costumes are used. In the Seoul, the shaman uses a different traditional costume according to the god to be invoked, for example, a martial costume for a martial god, a court costume for a civilian god, or a Taoist costume for a heavenly god. In the southern region, costumes are limited to everyday clothes or a few different kinds of shaman costumes.

The offerings in a greater *kut* consists of rice cakes, cooked rice, seasoned vegetable, grilled food such as fish, meat, and bean curd, apples, pears, persimmons, beef broiled on a skewer, broiled bovine hooves, boiled whole pig, and fried Alaskan pollack.

Offerings vary according to the god invoked. The number of ceremonial tables varies according to region and in a greater *kut* according to the kind of *kut* to be performed, ranging usually from three to ten tables. In a lesser *kut*, different sets of tables are sometimes prepared and sometimes not.

Shaman Costumes and Tools

Shaman costumes are colorful and come in many different shapes. Sundry items such as fan and sword are also considered essential parts of the costume. A variety of shaman costumes are used in *kut* according to the god invoked and the function of the *kori*. Regardless of region, the common ceremonial dress of a

shaman consists of a deep blue *ch'ima* (skirt) and a white *chogori* (jacket). This is essentially the woman's ceremonial dress in Korea. Shaman costumes consist of the following:

Chogori (a woman's top garment similar to a blouse): white *chogori*, *panhijang chogori* (with purple tie-strings and deep blue cuffs and the sleeves), yellow *chogori*, light green *chogori* (with a red collar, red tie-strings, and cuffs on the sleeves), with *choksam* (jacket), hempen *choksam*, cotton-quilted *chogori*.

Ch'ima (a woman's bottom garment similar to skirt): white *ch'ima*, deep blue *ch'ima*, red *ch'ima*, *namsuran ch'ima* (a deep-blue silk skirt with gold-tipped hems), *tahongsuran ch'ima* (a red silk skirt with gold-tipped hems), hempen *ch'ima*, a plain silk apron.

The Music of the *Kut*

In performing rituals, the shaman sings and dances before the ceremonial tables to musical accompaniment. Shaman songs are sung either in a recitative rhythm or in a singing melody. The forms of shaman songs include one in which the song is sung for a long time with an indistinct stanza and another in which the song is sung by the stanza. The melody in the stanza form is in singing style with a refrain that the shaman sings sometimes in chorus with the assistant shaman and the accompanying musicians.

Singing style varies according to region. In the northwestern region, when the chief shaman sings out a stanza in a rhythmic pattern, the assistant shaman follows. In the eastern region, when the chief shaman sings out stanza, the *changgu* (drum) accompanist sings out a counter-melody with "ahhh-."¹⁶

¹⁶ Po-hyung Yi, "Music of Korean Shaman," in *The Studies of Korean Shamanism*, ed. In-hoi Kim (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1982), 214-18.

The melody rule and melodic pattern of shaman songs vary according to region, but in general they follow the melodic rule and pattern of the folk songs of the region concerned.¹⁷

The best of the shaman songs varies according to region, but the predominant form is the 12/8 beat of the faster triple time and quadruple time. This singing style in the Seoul area is called *mansubaji*, a pattern in which the shaman sings in alternation with the *kidae*. *Mansubaji* has the function of invoking the God at the beginning of each *kori*. The drum provides the accompanying music. Shaman and *kidae* each sing a stanza alternately.

The *t'aryong* pattern has the function in each *kori* of praying to the God, glorifying the God, and pleasing the God. *T'aryong* is sung in 12/8 time, and the rhythm is after the pattern of the shaman song refrain, *olsiguna cholsiguna*, but the length of the refrain is irregular. The *T'aryong* songs are sung in the various *kori* of the *chongsin kut*. Then, there are the mixed beats of double time and triple time. The recitative style of shaman songs is irregular in rhythm or in free rhythm. The lyrics of *noraekarak* are in the formal metric form of *sijo*. *Noraekarak* has developed into songs in stanza form, and there is no refrain. The rhythm is the same as in *sijo*, in mixed quintuple and octuple times. *Noraekarak* is dedicated to glorifying the god and is sung at the end of each *kori*.¹⁸

The musical instruments used to accompany shaman songs and dances in *kut*, shaman rituals are: the *changgu*, *chegum*, *p'iri*, *taegum* and *haegum*. The

¹⁷ Sah-hoon Chang, *New Introduction to the Korean Music* (Seoul: Saekwangeumak-sah, 1988), 415-17; Huhm, 23-26.

¹⁸ Huhm, 28-31; and Sah-hoon Chang, 415-17.

changgu, *chegum* and *jing* are percussion instruments, *p'iri*, *taegum* are wind instruments, and *haegum*¹⁹ is a stringed instrument.

In Kyonggi, Chungchong, and Cholla provinces and in the Southwestern part of the Kyongsang provinces, wind and string instruments such as the *p'iri*, *taegum*, and *haegum* and percussion instruments such as the *changgu*, gong, and large and small cymbals are used. In other regions, only percussion instruments such as the *changgu*, gong, and large and small cymbals are used.²⁰

In most cases, the music accompanying a *kut* is played in unison with the shaman's singing, but in special cases there is an intermezzo. When the shaman dances or when special rituals are performed, accompanying music is played.

There are *kut kori* used as accompanying music for folk dances but they are entirely different from the music used to accompany shaman dances. In general, shaman dances are accompanied by joyous and elegant music in quadruple time (12/8). *Hoteun t'aryong* is elegant and brisk in quadruple time in the *chongsin kut* for various *kori*. *Tang'ak* is passionate and realistic in quadruple time. Shaman dances in most *kut kori* use the *tang'ak* rhythm.²¹

¹⁹ The *changgu* is made of a hollowed-out tree trunk sixty to ninety centimeters in length and thirty to forty centimeters in diameter at the ends, which are covered with hide. The waist is narrow in the shape of an hourglass. The player beats the right end of the drum with a slim bamboo stick and the left end with a club. The *chegum* is similar to cymbals used in Western music but a little smaller in diameter. The *P'iri* is made of a slim piece of bamboo and is similar in shape to the oboe. The *taegum*, also known as the *chottae*, is made of a piece of bamboo and is similar to the Western flute. The *haegum* is made of the large bottom part of a bamboo plant, and two strings are over it. The player plays it with a bow in a manner similar to playing a viola, though it is quite different in shape. The *jing* is a gong.

²⁰ Sah-hoon Chang, 212-49.

²¹ Huhm, 28-31; and Sah-hoon Chang, 212-49.

The Dance of the *Kut*

The chief shaman performs various kind of dances in a greater *kut*, depending upon the type of ritual and the region. In the Northwestern region, including Northern Kyonggi province, there are styles and forms based on both slow and fast beats, with those on fast beats being characterized by jumping. In the southern region, *salp'uri* (exorcising an evil spirit) and *kut kori* dances are predominant. In the eastern region, the dancer holds arms high, swinging.²²

Generally speaking, there are significant differences in the dance and musical aspects of the rituals as compared to other folk dances. Dances in the rituals of Korean shamanism, are considered as dances of a lowly class, like the dragon in Cheking province of China. Even professional dancers do not appear to have studied them. But in recent years the outstanding artistry of shamanistic dances has gradually come to be recognized and it is fortunate that the shamanistic dances are considered indispensable in the research of folk arts. Shamanistic dances in Korea were branded as the vocation of one of the *minjung* under the Yi dynasty. But shamans somehow managed to survive without holding rituals. It is believed that shamanistic dances are the parent body of Korean dances originating in religious rituals.

In Korean dances the concept of feathers and wings of a bird predominates. The costume of shamans has wide sleeves like the wings of bird and the headgear is decorated with a tail feather of a bird. As a refined form of bird wings, the costume of shamans in traditional shamanistic rituals has been adopted by professional dancers and singers. In arctic Siberia, where Korean shamanism originated, many races such as the Yakut, Turkhan, Altai, Soyot, Tungus use

²² Moon-ja Minn Suhr, "A History of Korean Dance" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Women's University, Graduate School, 1988), 251-64.

costumes of bird wings, and shamans in South America and Africa also use costumes of birds wings in shamanistic dances. Korean shamans perform *kut* wearing a silk costume with a bird wing feather on the head.²³

Rediscovering

Korean Christianity has been isolated from the other religious cultures of Korea. The missionaries taught Korean people that to accept Christianity means to cut ourselves away from the old way of religion. To become a Christian meant that we had to get rid of the household spirit shrines and forget about them. This was conversion.

Despite the missionaries' teaching, shaman music and dances are still attracting people. Shaman faith or custom is the most pervasive form of religious culture in Korea. The Korean Christianity, although very Western in its liturgy and appearances, is obviously quite shamanistic in its belief and behavior. In the final analysis, the Korean people all be shamanistic and Korean Christianity may be characterized as shamanistic Christianity. The Shaman ritual, *kut*, gives expression to the very soul and essence of the Korean people and their culture.

Korean shamanism is a religious practice centered around the *mudang*. *Mudang*'s dance and her music are the liturgy of the Korean shamanism. In her ritualistic trance she utters the words of spirits or words of God. There are no scriptures, no written rubrics of religious practice. Therefore, the *mudang* is the single most important figure in Korean shamanism.

Korean shamanism is a religion of wish-fulfillment and it is practiced by the deprived. The Korean shamanism is primitive and peripheral because women

²³ Huhm, 41-52, 84-91.

and the oppressed *minjung* participate in it. Shamanism in Korea is the least respected religion and sometimes even despised. Its practitioners are the most despised and oppressed. Korean shamanism is a religion of the Korean *minjung*. The Korean *minjung* turns to the *mudang* religion out of their social deprivation, poverty, ignorance, suffering and misfortune, imposed upon them by their social fate. In this religious practice Korean *minjung* can bring their *han*, their troubles, their tears, and their frustrations. The Korean *mudang* religion is an expression of the powerlessness of the Korean people.

A *kut* is full of symbols, gestures and objects, and only a few words are spoken. There may be some words of admonition and a few words of consolation. But a *kut* is essentially a religious ritual without words or linguistic explanation. There is no sermon to speak of. There is singing, chanting, drumming and dancing to induce the spirits to this world and to please them.

The shaman provides blessings in the present visible world by invoking the spirits of the invisible world. The shaman invokes the spirits of family ancestors – the spirits of the past which reside in the invisible world. The *mudang* is an intermediary between the world of the living beings (visible) and the world of spirits (invisible). In order to make contact with the other world, the shaman alter is laid out with a pig's head, cooked meat, sweet rice cakes and white rice wine. Cooked grains are used to exorcise; dried fish and live chickens to expel evil; and balanced swords to indicate blessing.

The entire *kut* is a drama between humans and spirits, the spirits of the past come into the world to give blessings to the people of the present. It is a drama of cosmic fighting between spirits. There is singing and dancing. There are tears and weeping which soon turn to joyous laughter and happiness. There are jokes, and consolation and harsh words, all coming from the past.

The *mudang* was once sick with a mental sickness (*shinbyung*). She was once called mad and spirit-possessed. The shaman has the experience of overcoming and transcending her illness, spiritual illness and the suffering of mental sickness. Therefore, she understands her client's grievances and suffering. She will resolve their *han*. She will cry with them, she will laugh with them, and she will hold their hands tightly and give them sincere and heart warming consolation.

Michael Saso has this to say about the positive or humanistic approach in understanding the *mudang* religion:

In the best sense of the *kut*'s social cultural impact on the community, the shaman rites definitely promote a sense of peace and smooth functioning of society in the Korean traditional mentality. A sense of historic significance, of social importance that touches the deepest sensitivities inside the human psyche, perhaps for years behind social sublimation, are a part of the *kut* experience. One feels that the best and worst of the human condition is touched and appreciated in the symbolic drama of the *mudang*.²⁴

The Korean shamanism may be criticized as the manipulation of the Korean *minjung* for submitting them to their fate and to the powerful. But this shamanism has enabled the Korean people to survive their fate and the exploitation of the powerful.

When Christianity came to Korea, conversion meant conversion from shamanism. Shamanism was despised by Christian missionaries and Korean Christians. It was a Christ against Culture model par excellence. It required a radical conversion burn all the *mudang* stuff before one came to Christ. Early mission success stories featured the new converts burning all of the house spirits

²⁴ Quoted in David K. Suh, *Theology, Ideology and Culture* (Hong Kong: World Student Christian Federation, Asia/Pacific Region, 1983), 46-47.

of the shaman. But now we ask whether the success stories of the Christian mission did not come about because of the culture of the *mudang* religion in Korea. The growth of Korean Christianity has a lot to do with the shamanistic mind-set of the Korean people, despite the fact that Christianity in Korea oppressed shamanism and set out to destroy the *mudang* religion. Korean Christianity was able to set deep roots in the religiously fertile soil of the shamanism. And the branches, the healthy leaves and the various fruits of Korean Christianity grew out of the soil of the Korean shamanism.

However, the possession of a *mudang* may be very directly connected with the Christian charismatic movement. The *mudang*'s possession-sickness is directly interpreted as the possession of the Holy Spirit. To receive the Holy Spirit in Christian terms and be converted to the Christian religion is to be possessed by Christ's Spirit. With the power of the Holy Spirit of the Christianity, one can speak in tongues and cure the sick as the *mudang* used to do. To be a Christian is to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. The *mudangs*' understanding of the world of spirits and spirit-possession, in other words, make it possible for Koreans to understand the nature of receiving the Holy Spirit of Christianity and its great power. Christian faith is almost exclusively interpreted as receiving the Holy Spirit, as the *mudang* falls into possession-sickness. The signs of receiving the holy Spirit are similar to the signs of the possession of *mudangs* who cure the sick and exorcise evil spirits. But the Christian pentecostals in Korea who claim to cure the sick and exorcise spirits disclaim the *mudang* origin of their practice and understanding, although many of them come from shaman backgrounds. It is a matter of degree in different churches in Korea: spirit-possession is transferred to faith in Holy Spirit. The practice, theology, and structure of spirit possession is the

same in the *mudang* religion and Korean Christianity. This may be by the strength of Korean churches. But it is also an extreme case of the seduction of the Spirit.

Korean Protestantism has almost been reduced to a Christianized *mudang* religion. That is, the form and language of the worship service are Christian, but the content and structure of what Korean Christians adhere to are basically the shaman. Although missionaries rejected shamanism and thought it had been destroyed, Korea Christianity has become almost completely shamanized.

Korean Christians have made the Christian worship service more casual and freer than traditional Western style worship. They sing loudly and well, like in a *kut*. There is a sense of joy in their service, and even the sense of festivity they experience in the *kut*. They experience a close sense of community, relatedness and togetherness with other persons in the service, as in the case of the *kut*. They share their sorrows, sufferings and pains as the poor and deprived and oppressed, and they also share a sense of liberation and salvation in the act of sharing. The shaman pathos is embodied in Christian worship and Christian pastoral care.

We Christians should be the Shamans of Christ, full of the Holy Spirit, to carry out the ministry of *han*, identifying ourselves with suffering humanity and appeasing the *han* of the people.²⁵

Chung-choon Kim believes it is important for Christians today to reap the rich insight of the Korean shamanistic tradition. The role of the shaman is to appease the spirits of the dead. Kim sees a parallel here with God's support of the legitimate cries of the oppressed.

²⁵ Chung-choon Kim, 20.

CHAPTER 4

Pongsan Mask-Dance Drama

Introduction

Masks, as a cultural object used in religious ceremonies and community festivals, have been made in all parts of the world in all periods since the Stone Age. In ancient Greece, they were used in tragic and comic drama. Actors wear masks to identify the characters they represent. And when actors do not wear masks, as in the Peking opera or a Japanese Kabuki play, they have their faces thickly painted to give the effect of a mask. Many native North Americans put on masks in their ceremonies. In ceremonial dances of the Hopi Indians, masked figures representing gods visit the villages, bring rain to the fields, and presents for the children. The devil dance of Sri Lanka is intended to frighten away diseases and evil spirits. The tribal peoples of West Africa, New Guinea, and the Amazon region of South America make some of the most dramatic masks.¹

Mask-dance is not just entertainment. It is not only for the pleasure of the eye. This universal culture and religious practice of the mask-dance is hidden and reveal at one and the same time emotions deeply ingrained in human nature- emotions or anger, joy, awe, fear, sorrow, hate, love, hope. In the mask dance, persons laugh and weep, discovering themselves and their society, reacting to the prevailing religious mores and political situations. The mask dance is of course entertainment. It helps people forget the toil of the day and the worries of tomorrow. The mask dance also creates community. It brings people together to form a larger family, sharing jokes and gossip, hopes and woes.

¹ "Masks," *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed.

But more importantly, the mask dance is a social and political event. It portrays the plight of the poor oppressed by the rich. It depicts the tragedy of powerless citizens under a tyrannical regime. It also inspires human resourcefulness in an unjust and merciless society. It records a good measure of the political wisdom of a people.

The mask-dance is also a religious event. It tells of divine intervention in human affairs. It shows that human beings are never far from God's favor or disfavor. It weaves their faith in the life to come into the stories of here and now. The mask dance can be a cry, a plea, a prayer, of a community in trouble. In it one discovers Minjung theology. Through it God must be working to comfort people, to give them hope and courage, and to prepare and empower them for social and political upheavals.

Korean Mask-Dance Drama

The Korean mask-dance drama has its roots in an old village festival. Once or twice a year, annually before the 15th day of the first month (lunar calendar), the villagers would perform various religious ceremonies asking the blessing of the gods for better crops for the year. These were either followed or preceded by a variety of entertainment in which the people gradually included satirical portrayals of aristocrats. By the 1700s the commercial class began to appear, and cities came into existence. With the support of the rising commercial class the mask-dance came into its own. It was later performed on festival days in April or May instead of January. The satirical content of the mask-dance drama became more audacious. The village ceremonies which were performed in order to pacify the gods became instead the play for the suppressed ordinary folks, the people's play ridiculing and thus criticizing their oppressors. The 1800s saw not only the

performance of bolder type of mask-dance but also the creation and increase of various new forms of artistic expression like novels, *p'ansori*,² and paintings, which were all expressions of the minjung consciousness.

The mask-dance drama is composed not only of dance but also rhythmic instrumental music, songs, and dialogue between the performers and the musicians and between the performers and the audience. The dance movements are dynamic and bold compared to those of the aristocratic dance, which are graceful and elegant. The mask-dance is full of humor, satire, and vulgar expressions with a great number of sex-related dirty words. It is a play and festivity with a great deal of improvisation and much disorder. Originally the masks depicted gods. In the mask-dance, however, they depict the characters that the performers represent. They also help people slip into the world of drama, fantasy, and vision. This happens especially when the masks become more grotesque with the rapid play of the flickering light of the bonfires on them as the actors dance.

Origins

A form of mask-dance theater commonly called *t'alch'um*³ is found in Hwanghae-do Province, a portion of west-central Korea now a part of North Korea.

For the past few hundred years, this folk mask-dance drama has been a popular form of theatrical entertainment in every major town in the province. It can generally be categorized into three regional groups: first, the one which is performed in the Western plains, centering around Pongsan and Hwangju; second,

² This is a dramatic solo performance with songs and jokes. See chapter, 5.

³ *T'al* means mask, while *ch'um* suggests dance in Korea. The compound of these two words, thus, implies mask-dance.

in the Southeastern plains including Kirin, Sinwon, and Soheung; and the third which is treasured in such coastal towns as Haeju, Kangnyong and Ongjin. Of these three groups the theaters in Pongsan, Kangnyong, and Haeju appear to be the most popular and have kept art alive until the present-day. The rest of the local versions are no longer performed and some of them have vanished from memory.⁴

Not a single historical document remains by which to verify the inception of these various groups. In the instance of the Pongsan *t'alch'um*, there exists a story which sheds some light on its origin. A long time ago there was an old Buddhist monk who had devoted his life to prayer for Buddha. As a result, he was not only greatly admired, but also practically worshiped as a living Buddha. Meanwhile, there was a young clergyman, an acquaintance of the high monk, who whiled away his time by indulging in intemperate drinking and debauchery. Disregarding his own faults, he was extremely jealous of the high esteem enjoyed by the old monk. He made several attempts to tarnish the old monk's reputation, but failed each time. One day, in a fit of jealousy, the young monk bribed a local professional sing-song girl,⁵ well-known for her peerless beauty and talent for singing and dance, to ensnare the high monk. Overwhelmed by her beauty, winsomeness, and dexterity, the old monk succumbed to his desire for her, disregarding his vows to Buddha. When the story of his transgression was revealed, hatred and antipathy for the old monk spread far and wide. A scholar in

⁴ Judy Van Zile, "Ch'oyongmu: An Ancient Dance Survives," *Korean Culture* 8, no. 2, (Aug. 1987): 4-19.

⁵ A sing-song girl was trained in singing, dancing, the art of the conversation, etc., to serve as a hired companion to men. (Ex.: Japanese *gei-sha*.)

the area wrote this mask-dance drama to discourage other monks from making similar mistakes as well as to ward off the demoralization of the people.⁶

Since this story has come down to us only in the form of a legend, it is difficult to know for certain if it accurately represents the beginning of this theater. Possibly the story does explain the reason for including scenes in the play where the fallen Buddhist monk is derided.

A second theory suggests that the mask-dance theater of Hwanghae Province is an off-shoot of *sandaeguk*, another kind of mask-dance theater from which the present Yangju *pyolsandae* allegedly originated. There are some similarities between Pongsan *t'alch'um* deal with the same subjects and characters which appear in Yangju *pyolsandae*. In addition, certain dialogues in Pongsan *t'alch'um* are almost identical with those of Yangju *pyolsandae*.

During the early seventeenth century the Yi dynasty withdrew official sanction for *sandaeguk*, which essentially meant that the players of this theater were no longer supported by the government. As a result, some of them apparently toured Hwanghae-do Province. Of course, a number of them eventually returned to the Seoul area, with the remainder settling down in such large towns as Pongsan, Haeju, and Kangnyong. It is possible that these itinerant performers, who once served in the Yi dynasty, were the progenitors of the mask-dance theater in the province. In the past few hundred years, then, each town has developed its own versions of this theater.

If these itinerant players of *sandaeguk* were indeed the progenitors of mask-dance theater in the region, then the theater in Hwanghae-do Province has a history stretching back approximately three hundred and fifty years. Despite its

⁶ Sang-su Choe, *Haeso Kamyonguk Yongu* [Study of Haeso mask-dance drama] (Seoul: Taesong Munhwasa, 1967), 74.

apparently long history, we know very little about its birth, development, and early performance.

According to one story from the region, an important rehabilitation of this theater took place during the eighteenth century. A man known as Cho-mok Ahn, a lowly official of the local government, made some changes in the performance of this theater. When An returned from exile on an island off the coast of south Cholla-do Province, he replaced the wooden masks with paper ones and introduced some new form of dance. Ever since then, it is believed that paper masks have been employed for the performance of this theater.⁷

Given this perspective, though it is difficult to prove, it can be postulated that this mask-dance theater has definitely undergone significant changes throughout its history.

Despite the fact that the first three hundred years of its history is incomplete, information on the activities of this theater during the past fifty years has become much more available, if not plentiful. With the exception of a few major companies, by the beginning of the twentieth century a majority of the local performing groups had vanished. Of the remaining theaters, Pongsan *t'alch'um* is regarded today as the most well-known, and is widely accepted among the scholars and critics as the most representative mask-dance drama of the province.

Until 1938 the performance of mask-dance drama was an integral part of the annual Tano Festival. This major holiday was held on the fifth day of the fifth month according to the lunar calendar. Between 1939 and 1945 this theater was shut down in every town by the occupying Japanese forces. The Japanese military, who started the Sino-Japanese War on July 7, 1938, declared that no mass

⁷ Ibid., 12.

entertainments could be allowed, ostensibly because this would disrupt the war efforts. In fact, this was their means of suppressing the national culture of Korea.⁸

According to people from the area who fled to Seoul during the Korean War, the performance of this mask-dance drama was revived after World War II and again became a popular part of the annual Tano Festival. But presently this theater does not thrive in its native area; the North Korean Government, virtually forbidding its theater to resemble past forms, discourages the performance for folk plays. They regard the mask-dance drama as backward and not sufficiently revolutionary. And Pongsan *t'alch'um* is one of them.

During the Korean war, a few players of this theater managed to migrate to Seoul. With other interested people they made an important attempt at reviving this theater in Seoul Korea. In 1958 the performance of Pongsan *t'alch'um* was held in Seoul as a part of the National Folk Arts Festival. A few players from the north and some volunteers hastily formed the Pongsan *T'alch'um* Company and represented the folk theater of Hwanghae-do Province during this event. Another giant step for the preservation of this drama was taken in 1967. The government of the Republic of Korea, recognizing this heritage, designated this theater an Important Intangible Cultural Property. Since then this theater has been supported by the government.

Players, Stage, and Performance

Until the close of the nineteenth century, the players of mask-dance drama in Hwanghae-do Province were the lowly municipal officials. These were men who inherited the menial professions of stewards and petty officers. And just as

⁸ Wi-jo Kang, *Religion and Politics in Korea Under the Japanese Rule* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 69-82.

they followed their fathers' professions in the local government, they assumed the roles which their fathers had performed whenever this drama was produced. Thus they acquired performing skills in this theater while young men. It is said that some roles were played by members of the same family generation after generation.

Traditionally, only men played in this theater. But during the Japanese occupation this long tradition was broken when some local professional sing-song girls, *kisaeng*, began to participate in the performance, playing the roles of Sangjwa and Somu. The use of sing-song girls brought about another change. These girls appeared in the production without masks in order to show off their beautiful faces.⁹

Although the social position of these local civil servants was never high, the players of this theater were not looked down upon. The present players of both Pongsan and Kangnyong *t'alch'um* in Seoul are no longer lowly government officials as their predecessor were during the Yi dynasty but they are selected from a wide variety of social background.¹⁰

As in the case of all other forms of traditional mask-dance theater in Korea, the Hwanghae variety had neither a permanent theater structure nor a formal stage. Traditionally, the performance took place outdoors. The production of this drama needed no theatrical scenery. Thus any open-air space could be easily converted into a temporary playground.¹¹ Spectators would surround the playing area and leave a narrow path for the players to make their entrances and exits to the nearby

⁹ Ibid., 280.

¹⁰ Tu-hyon Yi, *Hankuk-ui T'alch'um* [Korean mask-dance drama] (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1981), 90.

¹¹ The word playground (*nori madang*) means play space. Usually traditional Korean theater does not use the word stage.

temporary costume room. The dimensions of the playground varied, ranging from as few hundred to several hundred feet in diameter.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century Pongsan *t'alch'um* took place on a sandy terrace at the bottom of a hill located near the river. It is reported that this stage was raised approximately a foot above the ground. This unconventional construction was apparently to improve the audience's view.

The mask-dance theater in Pongsan moved to Sariwon in the 1920s and began to use the temporary two story structure which was built for the Tano Festival. This maskshift structure was partitioned into twenty-eight compartments which encircled slightly more than half of the circular playground. Three of these compartments were reserved for the players dressing rooms. The remaining cubicles were rented out to local merchants as temporary restaurants for the duration of the festival. The proprietors of these restaurants would issue special invitations to their regular patrons who would then come to eat and drink while watching the performance from the upper level of the temporary auditorium. Members of the audience who could not afford to pay for food and drink at the restaurants would watch the play while standing on the ground. There was no admission fee.

Since the performances took place outdoors at night, several blazing bonfires were set around the playground for illumination. This type of lighting was particularly effective for displaying the colorful masks; it accentuated their mysterious expressions during the performance.

Today both companies of Pongsan and Kangnyong *t'alch'um* in Seoul share the same indoor stage. The performing area is raised approximately two feet above the auditorium floor. The rectangular stage of this converted theater has a kind of proscenium opening.

According to Tu-hyun Yi, the government frequently sponsored the production of *sandaeguk* to entertain foreign envoys, especially those from China. For this purpose, the court often dispatched companies of players to northern cities situated along the route the dignitaries would travel from the Chinese border to Seoul. Considering the inconveniences of travel during that time, it was difficult for the players to reach such remote cities as Pyongyang and Hwangju. It was not only time consuming, but expensive. As the players often arrived too late, the court sometimes mobilized local troupes of performers to take their places. The old companies of Pongsan and Hwangju were believed to have been called upon frequently for this purpose.¹²

Mask-dance drama troupes were also often summoned by the local magistrates to perform upon the occasion of their birthday, their children's weddings, and other important public ceremonies. However, for the past one hundred years the performance of this drama has been limited exclusively to the Tano Festival.¹³

Approximately a month prior to the Tano Festival the players and the persons who were involved in the performance would take their holy bath. Then they would begin to lodge together in the local Buddhist temple where rehearsal of the play, mask-making, and the construction of properties, preparation and performance took place.¹⁴

The production of this drama was an expensive venture; it meant money for the lodging of forty people, the making of masks and properties, and frequently

¹² Tu-hyun Yi, *Hankuk-ui Kamyungeuk* [Korean mask-drama] (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1979), 83-84.

¹³ Ibid., 183-84.

¹⁴ Yang-ki Kim, *Choson-no Kamen III* [Choson masks III] (Tokyo: Sinko Bijutsu Shuppan, 1967), 60.

the purchasing of new costumes. No single official or citizen was responsible for these expenses. Until the end of the Yi dynasty, the cost for the production was customarily borne by the local citizens each year in the form of a tax. Although the citizens were willing to pay the expenses for the production in good times, it was not an easy task to collect enough money when famine hit the farmers. From 1910 to 1930 the method of raising funds for the production was changed. During that period expenses were mainly the responsibility of the local merchants, who rented the temporary compartments to open maskshift restaurants, and the wealthy citizens.

Masks, Properties, and Music

All masks employed for the production of Pongsan *t'alch'um* are typified by their fantastic and outlandish appearances. For example, the masks for the eight Mokchung are far more rugged than the masks for the same characters in the plays from Kangnyong and Haeju. Each grotesque-looking mask has seven protuberances covered with beaten gold: two on the forehead, two between the eyebrows, two on the lower cheeks, and one the chin. Another interesting characteristic of the masks from Pongsan is that they are usually quite asymmetrical. The size of the mask is comparatively smaller than the masks from the other regions. All masks are made of paper except those of the lions. Because of these grotesque qualities, the Pongsan masks are often referred to as “demonic masks.”¹⁵

It is not known exactly when the production of this drama began to use paper masks. According to some scholars, wooden masks were employed in the

¹⁵ Sang-su Choe, 17.

original performances. Approximately two centuries ago, the wooden masks were allegedly replaced with paper masks.¹⁶ It not exactly clear why the wooden masks gave way to the paper ones. But it is presumed that the production of wooden masks was not only too expensive but also too time consuming.

Traditionally, the performance of this drama took place at night on the fifth day of the fifth month and lasted until dawn. At the end of the performance the players customarily tossed their masks, properties, and frequently their costumes, into the blazing bonfire; this was done while bowing solemnly and keeping their palms together. They were burned because the people believed that once the masks and properties were used in the production of this drama they were bedeviled with demonic spirits. To get rid of the devils and cleanse the players and audience, it was necessary for them to burn the bewitched masks. Thus the masks and properties, which were constructed for the performance with great labor and much expense of time, became ashes and smoke after a single use. Each year the process began again and posterity was deprived of these rich examples of those earlier creations.¹⁷ The present company in Seoul burn neither the masks nor properties after each performance and they are used again and again.

The mask making was usually entrusted to one or more players skilled as models, the mask maker had to depend entirely upon memory. Without a model it was impossible for the mask maker to recapture the exact essence of the old mask.¹⁸ Throughout history, therefore, it is conceivable that the appearances of these masks have changed somewhat.

¹⁶ Tu-hyun Yi, *Hankuk-ui Kamyunkeuk*, 185.

¹⁷ Ibid., 186.

¹⁸ Oh-kon Cho, trans., *Traditional Korean Theater* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 210.

As in all other traditional mask-dance theater of Korea, both music and dance were integral parts of the production. The relatively small group of musicians for the production was usually made up of two *p'iri* (fife), one *chottae* (transverse flute), one *haegum* (two-stringed Korean fiddle), one *changgu* (hourglass-shaped drum), and one *puk* (barrel drum). During the performance, the musicians played a variety of tunes, including *yombul*, *t'aryong* and *kutkori*.¹⁹ Then the players would dance numerous dances.

The Play

The Nojang Scenes

A group of young monks lead in an old monk, Nojang (old Buddhist monk). The old monk disappears. When they find him crouched in a corner, they take him for a collection of goods or a huge monster of a snake, and have difficulty in recognizing him. The young monks sing into his ears popular songs he used to like. He begins to stir. They then lead him by his stick. He disappears again. Again they look for him. Finding him lying down so quiet, they think he is dead. They sing requiem mass. He begins to move again.

The young monks then bring in a pretty young girl. The old monk takes a look at her and begins to move. He courts her and gives her his string of beads, which is symbol of his status; and they dance together. When a travelling shoe salesman appears, the monk buys her a pair of shoes.

A playboy called Ch'wipali comes into the scene. Ch'wipali defeats the monk, and with his money buys the affection of the young woman. She begets for

¹⁹ *Yombul* is a tune of buddhist invocation such as the repetition of the sacred name of Amitabha with a six-beat pattern. *T'aryong* is a ballad tune, while *kutkori* is a tune derived from farmers' music of the kyonggi province.

him a baby boy; and he happily places his hope for the future on the baby. Monks are supposed to give up worldly pleasures, so that they are supposed to dwell in a secluded place, usually in the mountains. But the old monk succumbs to the temptation of the flesh. However, he turns out to be too old, impotent, and unproductive, and naturally happy as a man. This Nojang represents a senile spirituality and a metaphysical religion that is separated from this world and thus is unproductive. As such, the value and leadership of this so-called higher religion is the target of jokes, satire, and laughter.

The Three *Yangban* Scenes

Three yangban (aristocrats) brothers are brought in by Malttugi, their servant. Malttugi announces the arrival of the yangban by saying, “Yangbans are coming! But don’t think these yangbans are scholars or are civil servants holding high government posts.” He degrades the word “yangban” by punning on it to mean all kinds of derogatory things. When the oldest yangban brother protests, Malttugi corrects himself by saying that he referred to them as those who have been in high government service and are very respectable. The yangban accepts his explanation. Later, this yangban calls for him. Malttugi replies, “I looked for you all over the world but could not find you. I went to your home and found your wife alone. I did it again and again. As I was leaving after a sumptuous feast she gave me a penis as a gift.” At the protest of the yangban, he corrects himself by saying that she gave him a stick of dried fish.²⁰ Again the yangban is deceived. Later Malttugi defeats the yangbans in a poetry contest—a favorite pastime of the yangbans in which they are supposed to be quite skilled. In this sport Malttugi

²⁰ The vulgar expressions in Korean for both “penis” and “stick of dry fish” sound nearly the same.

proves to be far more able and makes fun of the literati's so-called "learned" words.

The yangban class is the ruling elite. They are supposed to be scholarly, respectable, and removed from the mundane world of ordinary folks. Thus, they do not hear what Malttugi is saying, but accept his explanations at face value. They do not see what is happening around them. They are so preoccupied with their own world and the existing system in which they hold very prestigious and privileged positions. This preoccupation makes them blind to the reality of the world. The audience however hears everything and sees everything. They laugh heartily. Malttugi, knowing the reality, dramatizes the situation and caricatures the aristocrats and thus exposes the incongruities in the establishment.

The Miyal Halmi Scenes

Miyal halmi (old woman, *Miyal*) comes into the scene looking for her husband (*Yonggam*). She was separated from him many years ago when there was a war on the Cheju Island where they used to live. Then an old man comes in searching for his long separated wife. They had a lot to tell each other after all those year of separation and hardship:

Miyal: How have you got along and where have you wandered since we were separated form each other?

Yonggam: Since the tumult separated us, I wandered here and there and experienced many difficulties.

Miyal: What's the hat you're wearing?

Yonggam: Do you want to hear the story of this hat? I wandered here and there through the southern provinces. At that time I had no way or means of earning a living. So I got a set of soldering tools and wandered around. One day I encountered a Sandae-Dogam [official in ancient Korea in charge of mask-dance drama]. He said to me: "There is no one who isn't afraid of the tigers of Mount Inwang [on the outskirts of Seoul], and there is no solderer who isn't afraid of Sandae-Dogam. You must pay the tax allotted to your

work.” I asked how much it was. He said the tax was one don and eight poon. It was too heavy for me. I earned eight poon a day at that time. If I paid the tax, I would go into debt at the rate of one don a day. So I said I could not pay the tax. On hearing this, he suddenly attacked me, and we began to fight. As a result, my clothes and hat were torn. I look into my toolbox and found the skin of a dog. So I made a coronet of it and wore it. Don’t I look like a Dongji [government] official?

Miyal: Dongji, Dongji, Dongji of bears! You could never be an official, could you? eh! [she cries]. Jeol, Jeol, Jeolsogoo! [in the tune of a song] Look at the man’s miserable appearance, ladies and gentlemen!...Yonggam! Your face looked like a withered branch. What has been the matter with you?

Yonggam: Nothing was the matter with me. But acorns and potatoes are all that I have eaten till now. How have things been with our children? Is Moonyeol [their oldest son] doing well?

Miyal: Oh, no! As we were very badly off, I had him go out to gather firewood and he was eaten by a tiger in the woods.²¹

There is humor in the mask dance, to amuse the audience. There are jokes that lighten the hearts of spectators. But in the midst of jokes and humor the misery of the old husband and wife must have driven home to any audience the cruelty and mercilessness of government officials.

The two stage a reunion and happily engage in sexual intercourse. Nothing happens. They begin to tell each other all the troubles they have been through. The husband suffered hunger, trouble with tax collectors, beatings from monks for raping a nun, etc. Spectators must be moved by this seemingly ordinary tale of separation and reunion. As the old husband and wife recount the troubles they have gone through, tear must be flowing behind the masks. And the voices coming through the masks must turn into wailing. Those in the audience cannot sit there unaffected. They must find it difficult to hold back their own tears. It is all because of government cruelty! The youthful years of the husband and wife are gone forever; the wrinkles on the masks make that sadly evident. Their zest for life

²¹ Tu-hyun Yi, *Hankuk-ui T'alch'um*, 128.

is gone; the gray hairs on the masks make that painfully obvious. And their hope for tomorrow? It seems all buried in the yesterday that will not return. After their reunion, the Miyal [old woman] discovers that her husband has a young concubine (Tolmori). They fight with each other; and they try to negotiate a divorce. But the husband will not give her alimony. In the fight the old woman gets killed. A village elder comes in and calls for a shamanistic ritual for the purpose of committing the dead woman's soul to heaven.

The mask dance has projected onto the stage of life a clear image of the human person over against that of oppressive power. C. S. Song says that

“Human person” is not a matter of definition, but a matter of life with deep involvement in the tragic affairs of society. “Human person” is life abused, the spirit crushed, the mind benumbed-in short, humanity under the unbearable weight of inhumanity. “Human person” is the image of God that evil forces in the world are out to stalk, overpower, and destroy.²²

The *minjung* audience participates in the sad story. This is their lot in this world. In a world where the aristocrats rule, it is the people who suffer hunger, separation, exploitation, beatings, etc. etc. No help comes from the so-called respectable religion. Even nature (tiger) seems to be against them. They also have trouble among themselves. There is no exit! And yet both the performers and the audience participate in the story-telling with jokes and laughter. Their conditions and they themselves are laughable. Also laughable is their own religion which is the only source of consolation in this weary world. The whole world is laughable. Both the performers and the audience weep and laugh at the same time.

At the end of the scene, which is also the end of the whole mask-dance, a village elder's advice, “Children, awake! The dawn is approaching from the east

²² Choan-seng Song, *Theology from the Womb of Asia* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 221.

and the south,” is often added. Dream-time and fantasy are over. One has to go back to the world of everyday life.

Recapitulation

The power of the mask dance comes from what is called “experience of critical transcendence”:

In and through the mask dance the *minjung*, the ordinary folk, experience and express a critical transcendence over this world and laugh at its absurdity. By satirizing the aristocrats they stand over against the aristocrats. By laughing at the old monk they stand above him... They [also] laugh at and make fun of their own fate in this world, thereby transcending their own conditions... They not only see correctly the reality of the world, which both the rulers and leaders cannot see because of their obsession with and separation from the world, but also envision another reality over against and beyond this one which too both the rulers and leaders cannot see.²³

According to the Minjung theology, the minjung were revolutionaries, but not simple revolutionaries.²⁴ If they were, after repeatedly getting beaten up, imprisoned and killed, they would soon fall into despair and give up. They did not give up. In the process of repeated beating they rather developed a wisdom to survive in the most adverse conditions with human dignity. They developed a capacity to laugh and to play clown, a way for the victim to become the victor. They laugh not only at the leaders and oppressors but also at themselves and at the shamanistic religion to which they obstinately cling in everyday life. It means they experience transcendence not only over the world controlled by their enemies but

²³ Young-hak Hyun, “A Theological Look at the Mask-dance Drama in Korea,” in *Minjung Theology*, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1981), 46.

²⁴ Young-hak Hyun, “Minjung the Suffering Servant and Hope,” Lecture delivered at James Memorial Chapel, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 13 April 1982.

over the total history including their own religion. They seem even to put their own lot and the religion under the judgment of God. They seem to be overcoming the danger of self-righteousness. They seem to be aware of original sin. They seem to be forgiving even their enemies, reconciling with them. In the minjung's celebration of the mask dance, it seems, the minjung are already enjoying the experience of the eschatological reality, the Kingdom of God. They seem to be confident that the day will come when the Kingdom will be realized in full. They do not have to hurry, they can wait, laugh and joke even about themselves and their own ridiculousness, for they are confident. They know how to laugh at and celebrate what they are and what they do. It is interesting to notice that the areas where the peasants revolted and the revolutions were frequent are the very same areas where the mask-dance drama, *p'ansori* kind of minjung culture was highly developed. Through laughter the performers and the audience experience "critical transcendence" of the world's injustices. The suppressed feeling of the *minjung's han* explodes in the performance into concrete body language and the *minjung* become conscious of their situation. Such critical transcendence never arises from the biography of an isolated individual, but rather from the socio-political and historical biography of the *minjung*. The experience helps the *minjung* to transcend present history and transform the world of oppression.

CHAPTER 5

P'ansori as Story Telling

Introduction

The *kwangdae* stands and the drummer sits. The *kwangdae* sings and the drummer beats a drum to create a rhythm. What is sung constitutes a long narrative like the “Song of Chun-hyang”, the “Song of Shim-Chong,” and the “Song of Hungbu”. While singing, *kwangdae* gestures. Thus, *p'ansori* is both music and literature. As music, it is kind of folk music; as literature, it is also of the people, a kind of folk or oral literature. Music and literature are combined gesture needed for this performance is an essential element of *p'ansori*. But *p'ansori* is not drama. It is a long form of vocal music in which one sings a work of narrative literature, while doing bodily movement. *P'ansori*, a folk art and a popular art, was created and transmitted without the aid of scores or libretti. *P'ansori* novels, which are the *p'ansori* narratives fixed in novel form, are to be distinguished from *p'ansori* itself.¹

The world, *p'ansori*, is explicated in various ways. If we understand *p'an* as in *norip'an* (playground), the word is interpreted as meaning “song sung upon having arranged a playground.” If we take *p'an* as the block on which something is printed, the expression would be interpreted as meaning “a song sung as previously fixed in printing.” If we understand *p'an* as referring to a musical score, then the expression means “a song sung according to a score with fixed melodic lines”.²

¹ Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, *P'ansori-ui Ihae* [Understanding of the *p'ansori*] (Seoul: Changjak-gwa Pip'yong-sa, 1978), 11.

² Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae* [A realm of legend literature] (Seoul: Saemun-sa, 1989), 239-40.

P'ansori is sung as a mixture of *aniri* and *ch'ang*. *Aniri* is passage delivered in a spoken voice. Since it is too tiring to perform continuously in the vocalized *ch'ang* mode, *aniri* is inserted from time to time to let the *kwangdae* spell themselves. Since *p'ansori* is considerably longer than any folk song poem it is not reasonable to sing it continuously. But the *aniri* passages are no more than incidental to the whole.³

P'ansori ch'ang are characterized by the various rhythms in which they are sing: *chinyangjo*, *chungmori*, *chungjungmori*, etc. *Chinyangjo* is a slow rhythm, *chungmori* is middling, and *chungjungmori* is fast.⁴ These rhythms are set by the drummer, to guide the *kwangdae* as he expresses them in song. The change of rhythm is a effective method for expressing changes in feeling and, therefore, the variety of rhythm *p'ansori* distinguish it from other kinds of vocal music. Another distinguishing characteristic is the wide range in which the *kwangdae* sings, moving freely from very high to very low.

P'ansori vocalization (developed during the training of a *kwangdae* when he becomes hoarse and even spits up blood) may sound impure but it has great volume and is capable of wide variety of effects.⁵ It is difficult for most untrained people to imitate the *kwangdae*'s rhythm, range, and vocal quality. Hence, *p'ansori* is a *kwangdae*'s specialized vocal art, distinguished from the folk songs that almost anyone can sing or the *sijo* or *kagok* that can be sung with some amount of training; it is made unique by its refined techniques. The *p'ansori kwangdae* make their living by singing and, if they do well, they enjoy the glory of becoming a singer of

³ Ibid., 240.

⁴ Sah-hoon Chang, 500-03.

⁵ Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 12.

national reputation called *myungchang*, which means the great singer. Hence it was commonplace that they would train to the extent of spitting up blood.⁶

While *p'ansori* as music is a special form of vocal music, so *p'ansori* is a special form of oral narrative poetry. Oral narrative poetry constitutes the singing of a story and embraces narrative folk songs, narrative shaman songs, and *p'ansori*. The narrative folk song is simple in content and can be sung by anybody. The narrative shaman song is performed by a shaman during a *kut*: while it is longer and more complicated than the narrative folk song, it is simple and short when compared to *p'ansori*. While the narrative shaman song deals with the history of a spirit and draws the listener's attention to supernatural principles, *p'ansori* introduces ordinary people on its stage and deals with questions that arise in the course of ordinary life. In all of oral literature, no form has such protean variety as *p'ansori*.

The story line of *p'ansori* is simple but, in areas of expression and embellishment, it incorporates both such erudite style as we find in *kasa* and the novel and also such concrete and lively representations of everyday life as one cannot find in either *kasa* or the novel. In prosody, as well, *p'ansori* displays and manipulates the full variety of which Korean poetry is capable. With such capabilities, the *p'ansori kwangdae* is a composer/author of abundant power of originality. As it is true with all oral literature, *p'ansori* is essentially a "product of shared composition".⁷ But, while the *p'ansori kwangdae* receives an established tradition, they also exercise their own individual creative powers.⁸ *P'ansori*,

⁶ Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae*, 240-41.

⁷ Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 13.

⁸ Byung-wook Chung, *Hankuk-ui P'ansori* [Korean *p'ansori*] (Seoul: Jipmun-dang, 1983), 28-29.

together with mask dance, are the most important products of popular literature of the later Yi dynasty. One can say that mask-dance is to drama what *p'ansori* is to "narrative literature."⁹

P'ansori's Twelve Madang

It is said that the *p'ansori* corpus originally consisted of twelve *madang*.¹⁰ The word *madang* refers to a work of *p'ansori* and for a given *madang* there are many versions, each made different by the *kwangdae* who sang them. One can define a *madang* as a group of song versions possessing a common story line. To speak of *p'ansori* as originally consisting of twelve *madang* is not to limit the number of *madang* to twelve; while there could be more, the number twelve appears to have resulted from a sorting-out that occurred at some point in the past. Be that as it may, the twelve *madang* shrank to six *madang* during the nineteenth century and, today, only five *madang* are still extant. These five *madang* are also referred to as the five songs.¹¹

The *Ch'un-hyang-ga*, *Shim Chung-ga*, *Hungbo-ga* and *Sugung-ga* are widely known. All four are believed to be *p'ansori* adaptations of folk tales and were transmitted not only as *p'ansori* but also in the form of the novel. In the case of *p'ansori*, the suffix *-ga* (song) was added to the name; and, in the novel, the suffix was *-jon* (tale). The *Chokpyuk-ga* is an adaptation of the "battle of the Red Cliff" episode of the Chinese novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It is distinguished by the incorporation of satire that is not found in the original. The

⁹ Marshall R. Phil, "The Korean Singer of Tales," *Korea Journal* 24, no. 10 (Oct. 1984): 21.

¹⁰ Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 13.

¹¹ Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae*, 242, 258.

Pyon 'gangsoe-t'aryong has not been passed down as *p'ansori* and only the narrative text recorded by Shin Chae-hyo survives today. It is note-worthy that there is no novel version of this *p'ansori* work. It did not continue to be performed, perhaps because its content is more lewd than other *p'ansori*. No singer's script remains for the *Paebijang-t'aryong* and there is only a novel version extant today, *Paebaengi-jon*. Although not even a novel exists for the *Kangungmaehwa-jon*, we know that it is a satirical piece in which a *kisaeng* named Meahwa pokes fun at a county magistrate. The *Onggojip* survives as the novel, *Onggojip-jon*. In this tale, a false *Onggojip* appears and, abusing the miserly *Onggojip*, causes him to reform his ways. The *Changkki-t'aryong* is assumed to have the same content as the novel, *Changkki-jon*. This story deals satirically with the husband-wife relationship through the tale of a hen pheasant who remarries after her cock pheasant dies. Not only do *Walche-t'aryong* and *Katchashinon-t'aryong* have different titles but Song Man-jae and Chong No-shik speak differently of their content. Of them, only the novel, *Sugyongnangja-jon* survives.¹²

Origins of *P'ansori*

P'ansori emerged in the later half of the Yi dynasty (1392-1910). It is commonly known that most forms of oral literature, generally speaking, have existed ever since some indeterminate point in the past. Only *p'ansori* is an exception. During the later Yi dynasty, when popular culture arose in earnest, *p'ansori* appeared as one intensive expression of that popular culture. It emerged in the early eighteenth century—perhaps at the end of King Sukchong's reign (1674-

¹² Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 14-15.

1720) or early in King Yongjo's reign (1724-1776) as the closest estimate.¹³ The earliest documentary evidence of *p'ansori* is the 1754 (Yongjo 30) manhwaon text of the "Song of Chunhyang". This material, being a translation into Chinese poetry of the content of the "Song of Chun-hyang", suggests a world in which the *p'ansori Chun-hyang* was widely heard.

There are several views regarding the origins of *p'ansori* but, of them, the shaman narrative song theory seems the most reasonable. In the case of professional in Cholla-do province, the women inherited craft from their mother-in-law and the men, while assisting their wives in the role of accompanist, also became *kwangdae*. Because it was difficult to make a living as a shaman's accompanist, they would seek other means: as a result, if talented, they would become *kwangdae* singers; if they lacked good voices and could not sing well, they could also work as drummers or become tumblers or tight-rope walkers.¹⁴

P'ansori kwangdae of Cholla-do province originated from professional shaman households; diversity of regional origin and social background was a later-day phenomenon. Since both narrative shaman songs and *p'ansori* are long oral narrative poems, the transition from narrative shaman song to *p'ansori* could have come about easily. Furthermore, narrative shaman songs are generally delivered in a mixture of song (*ch'ang*) and spoken (*aniri*) modes, like *p'ansori*, and Cholla-do province shaman songs are known to employ the same rhythmic patterns as *p'ansori*. The background of the emergence of *baebaengi-kut* must have similarity to this.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁴ Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae*, 244.

¹⁵ Ibid., 245.

There is more to the relationship of narrative shaman songs and *p'ansori*. As works of extraordinary power that could accomplish things beyond the reach of ordinary people, narrative shaman songs were built around shamanic spirits that were the object of religious faith. Since these songs were ultimately derived from ancient heroic narrative poetry, their transmission and creativity were constrained by their basis in a shamanic world view. But *p'ansori* was a secular narrative poetry that had broken free from such constraints and dealt realistically with issues that arose in the daily lives of ordinary people. *P'ansori* was a new narrative poetry that rejected the shaman world view and expressed, as is, a reality that had been concealed by the conceptual premises of shamanism. *Baebaengi-kut* provides us with a valuable key to understanding this transition. *Paebaengi-kut* (which pokes fun at shaman customs as a bogus shaman invokes the spirit of the dead Paebaengi) can be seen as evidence that a shaman song when subverted, becomes *p'ansori*. As a time when shaman narrative songs were surviving as the art of a bygone age, *p'ansori* subverted their tradition and pointed to new directions for the popular arts.¹⁶

There were conditions of the times that facilitated the transition from narrative shaman song to *p'ansori*. As Korea entered the later half of the Yi dynasty period and a popular consciousness was stirring, not only were people born of the shaman class able to criticize their own shaman customs but, additionally, an audience appeared that was calling for *p'ansori*. With the development of commerce, a wealthy bourgeoisie class was established and, since this class demanded realistic arts that were more entertaining than religious and magical ones, the *kwangdae* found himself able to make a living singing *p'ansori*. This

¹⁶ Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 16-17.

p'ansori was not simply a more entertaining version of the shaman *kut* : it was able to offer even greater appeal to a new audience in that it broke out of the *kut* framework and was rich in humor and satire. This humor and satire which could be seen also in mask dance and narrative *sasol sijo* poetry,¹⁷ was a particularly important product of popular literature in this period.

When it first appeared, *p'ansori* was probably simple in content and coarse and unrefined in expression, as is exemplified by *Paebaengi-kut*. But, as a result of continuing efforts by *p'ansori kwangdae* to develop their musical and literary skills and to satisfy the demands of their audiences, they further enriched and invigorated the content and expression of *p'ansori*. It was easier to create new story-line than to adopt folk tales to the *p'ansori* form. While such *p'ansori* as the “Song of the Water Palace” or the “Song of Hungbu” were based upon simple folk tales of long-standing tradition, they incorporated a variety of episodes not found in that tradition and, hence, developed into works that were believably reflective of late Choson period society and also acquired internal thematic material that contrasted with their externally obvious didactic themes. On the other hand, such works as the “Song of Shim-chong,” the “Song of Chun-hyang,” and the “Song of Pyongangsoe” were not *p'ansori* adaptations of certain given folk tales but, rather, were made up of diverse folk materials organized into the shape of a *p'ansori* work. The “Song of the Red Cliff,” however, was a rendering into *p'ansori* form of one part of a fictional work.¹⁸ In this process, *p'ansori* not only interpolated folk and popular songs and also made abundant use of humorous sayings and idiomatic

¹⁷ *Sasol sijo* was a narrative verse form derived from classical *sijo* by extending the first or second of its three lines. A development of the late Choson period, *sasol sijo* was increasingly popular among commoners (*minjung*) and reflected their sensibilities.

¹⁸ Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae*, 246.

phrases, but it even borrowed lines of Chinese poetry and classic allusions to decorate its sentences. As members of the *yangban*, aristocracy were included the audiences, so *p'ansori* incorporated refined expressions suited to *yangban* tastes and even imitated fiction of the written language. In so doing, *p'ansori* developed its distinctive complexity and even displayed characteristics that resonated with *yangban* literature. In spite of all this, *p'ansori* did not suffer a loss in its popular character: it provided a basic direction for the growth of popular literature while also reflecting the demands of *yangban* audience.¹⁹

From the point of view of *kwangdae* activity, the history of *p'ansori* can be divided into three periods: the eighteenth century as an era of growth, the nineteenth century as the heyday, and the twentieth century as a period of decline. During the eighteenth century reigns of Yongjo (1724-1776) and Chongjo (1776-1800), when the *kwangdae* Ha Un-dam, Choe Son-dal, and U Chun-dae were active, the twelve *madang* appear to have taken shape. In the nineteenth century, from the reign of Sunjo (1800-1834) through the beginning of Kojong's reign (1863-1907), Song Hung-nok, Mo Hung-gap, and Kwon sa-in were active, according to "Song of the *kwangdae*", a verse description of the art of the *kwangdae*, written by Shin Chae-hyo (1812-1884).²⁰ All twelve *madang* had survived until the time of Shin Chae-hyo, for he chose the six best examples from among them to transcribe for posterity. During this period, as *yangban* began to take a fancy to *p'ansori*, the social position of the *p'ansori kwangdae* improved

¹⁹ Ibid., 247-48.

²⁰ The "Song of the *kwangdae*" (*kwangdae-ga*), was composed sometime between 1866 and Shin's death in 1844. Tong-uk Kim, "P'ansori Yongu-ui Chemunje" [Issue in *p'ansori* research], in *P'ansori-ui Ihae* [Understanding of *p'ansori*], eds. Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim (Seoul: Changjak-gwa Pip'yong-sa, 1978), 96.

and, consequently, the content of *p'ansori* was embellished and polished to suit *yangban* tastes. Whereas such a change meant development for *p'ansori*, it also led to untoward deterioration at the same time. Thus, in this era, civil service functionaries (*ajon*) like Shin Chae-hyo became patrons of *p'ansori* and exerted an influence over *kwangdae*. They not only edited the narratives but also tried their hands at formulating theories on the *p'ansori* art. When Shin Chae-hyo distinguished three versions of the Song of Chun-hyang" (for male singers, female singers, and child singers), he precipitated the emergence of female and child *kwangdae*. Even the father of the king, *Taewongun*, took such a fancy to *p'ansori* that he bestowed official rank on *kwangdae*. In the twentieth century, after the passing of the Enlightenment Period (1876-1910), singers like Kim Chang-nyong, Song Man-gap, and Chong Chong-nyol were active and singing five of the erstwhile twelve *madang*. By this time, as urban audience expanded, *p'ansori* moved successfully onto the theatrical stage and, in addition, appeared in an operatic form called *ch'angguk*. However, it is said, the vocal quality of *p'ansori* could no longer match that of former generations.²¹

The distinction in *p'ansori* vocal style between Eastern and Western schools dates back to its heyday in the nineteenth century. *P'ansori* sang to the East of the Somjin-gang river (in Cholla-do province), and based upon the stylistic standard established by Song Hung-nok, was of the Eastern school; and that sang to the West of the Somjin-gang river, following the standard set by Pak Yu-jon, was of the Western school.²² While singing of the Eastern school was marked by a vocal quality described as *ujo*, that of the Western school was identified by the term,

²¹ Ibid., 76-77.

²² Here Eastern school and Western school translate "*tongyonje*" and "*sopyonje*," respectively.

kyemyonjo. While *ujo* imparted a spirited and manly feeling, that of *kyemyonjo* was more plaintive and sorrowful. Another school, neither Eastern nor Western, was called *chunggoje*.²³ Following the lead of Yom Kyedal and Kim Song-ok, it was widely adopted in both Kyonggi-do and Chungchung-do provinces. Such stylistic distinction resulted from the growing refinement and diversity of *p'ansori*.

Following later in the Eastern school tradition of Song Hung-nok were such master singers as Song Man-gap, Im Pang-ul, Pak Nok-chu, and Kim Soh-ui. Pak Yu-jon's Western School produced such noted singers as Yi Nal-chi, Kim Chang-hwan, Chong Chong-nyul, and Kim Yo-ran.

*Ch'angguk*²⁴ appeared during the Enlightenment Period. *P'ansori*, as a literary genre, is narrative literature; *ch'angguk*, as dramatic literature, is a play. Therefore, it is questionable whether the transition from *p'ansori* to *ch'angguk* can be seen as a natural development. It is natural to infer that the establishment of *ch'angguk* must have required the stimulation and influence of foreign drama. Indeed, we can confirm the influences of Chinese opera (introduced in Seoul during the Enlightenment Period), of New Wave drama (which emerged after Chinese opera), and of Western theater through New Wave drama. Not only was *ch'angguk* more profitable than *p'ansori*, in view of the audience that it drew, but it also enjoyed tremendous popularity.²⁵ However, it is a fact that the quality of *p'ansori* suffered damage in the process of turning into *ch'angguk*. Based upon this is the allegation that Song Man-gap, an active promoter of the transition to

²³ This means literally "mid-to-high style," perhaps a reference to its typically arching melodic line.

²⁴ This is a kind of opera, a staged version of *p'ansori*, in which multiple *kwangdae* appear, each taking a separate role, instead of the traditional solo performer playing all roles.

²⁵ Byung-wook Chung, 18-19.

ch'angguk, destroyed *p'ansori* and that Im Pang-ul, who protected traditional *p'ansori* to the end, glorified *p'ansori*. While some works were based upon new materials, because of the use of these new materials, it is felt that such *ch'angguk* did not amount to works worth seeing.²⁶ Although the shabby, wandering *ch'angguk* troupes of yesteryear have now disappeared, *ch'angguk* is still used, even today, as an easy means to transmit the art.

The Singing Method of *P'ansori*

P'ansori could be sung wherever there was an audience that would provide the wherewithal. *Kwangdae* would tour fishing villages in season or farming villages at harvest time, sell their songs in the markets, sing *p'ansori* at rich people's banquets, or when civil service candidates celebrated success in their examinations. They took pride in singing at the glory of standing before the King. Since the *p'ansori* audience was so heterogeneous, the *p'ansori kwangdae* had to be prepared to satisfy their many demands. Even while reflecting the viewpoint of the lower classes they also had to be responsive to the tastes of the *yangban* in their audiences. The ability to carry this off constitutes the *kwangdae's* art and accounts for a duality found in the thematic structure of *p'ansori*.²⁷

No stage is needed to sing *p'ansori*. It is sufficient simply to spread out a mat in a courtyard. On this mat, the *kwangdae* stands and the drummer sits. The *kwangdae* sings while the drummer sets down a rhythm, urging the singer on with encouraging cries of admiration, known as *ch'uimsae*. Although the role of the

²⁶ Tong-il Cho, *Kubimunhak-ui Sekae*, 248.

²⁷ This duality refers to "inner" and "outer" themes, which are discussed in chapter 5, *Social Consciousness in p'ansori*, 92.

drummer is essential, as suggested by the expression, “one drummer is worth two singers,” the drummer is never anything more than an accompanist. When the *kwangdae* may have ridden about in a palanquin, the drummer would follow after on foot, bearing his drum, reflecting their relative status and the consequent reception they received. As a result, there were not a few who served as drummers until, with effort, they managed to become *kwangdae*.

When beginning a *p'ansori* performance, it is customary to sing an opening song²⁸ to loosen up the throat. A *tan'ga* (short song) may be sung for an opener or, sometimes, there is an opening section to the work, itself, that is not related to the main song but is sung for this purpose. The opening song does not have a story line, is not particularly long, and is in the *kasa* narrative style. Examples are the “Song of Graybeard” (*paekpal-ga*) and “Song of Great Peace” (*t'aep'yong-ga*). While the purpose of the opening song is to warm up the voice, it also serves to help gather an audience together. Sin Chae-hyo wrote several opening songs, among which is his “Song of the *kwangdae*” (*kwangdae-ga*).

An opening song is always sung in the chungmori rhythm but, when it ends and the *p'ansori* proper begins, the full range of rhythmic variations can be revealed. Below are listed the several variant rhythms, from slow to fast.

chinyangjo: a sorrowful mood

chungmori: calm and composed quality with a sense of repose

chungjungmori: excites interest and suggests elegance

chajinmori: lively while delicate, crisp while self-possessed

hwimori: lends an air of excitement and tension

onmori: mixed rhythm, expressed of the sacred mood²⁹

²⁸ Such an opening song is known variously as *tan'ga*, *hudu-ga*, *ch'odu-ga*, and *mokp'unun-sori*.

²⁹ Byung-wook Chung, 73-81.

Rhythm variations not only have a musical effect but also play an important role in conveying the content of the narrative. The prison scene where Ch'un-hyang is absorbed in sorrow must be sung in *chinyangjo*, while the section where the secret inspector sets out on his journey must be rendered in *chajinmori*. *Aniri*, which was mentioned earlier, gives the *kwangdae* a chance to catch his or her breath and, furthermore, serves to create a sense of space within the song. One cannot do without it. However, some poorly trained *kwangdae* may try to fill time by doing less *ch'ang* and more *aniri*: such *kwangdae* are dismissed as “*aniri kwangdae*”.

For the which is called a *kwangdae*:
 first is the quality of his features,
 second is the quality of his narrative,
 and next is vocal attainment,
 and next is dramatic gesture.

Thus wrote Shin Chae-hyo in his “Song of the *Kwangdae*”.³⁰ This passage says that the four main requisites for *kwangdae* are good features, narrative, vocal attainment, and gesture. Features are their personal appearance. Narrative is the literary aspect of *p'ansori*. The fact that they give narrative as the second requisite suggests that *kwangdae* is not simply transmitter of pre-existing narratives but, rather, a creative artist in their own right. Vocal attainment is the musical aspect of *p'ansori*. Needless to say, vocal attainment is essential. In their verse, Shin Chae-hyo describes the impression given by a singer at great vocal attainment, as he

³⁰ Hon-bong Paik, *Ch'angak Taegang* [Outline of Korean vocal music] (Seoul: National Arts Institute, 1966), 538-40.

exploits the potentials of their voice in its several ranges: “long and short counterpoised against high and low, voices of endless changes.”³¹

Dramatic gesture (*norumsae*) is a means of expression that uses bodily movement. While the *p'ansori kwangdae* sings, he also endeavors to unfold the scene in a believable manner. Given a section where two characters are exchanging dialogue with each other, they not only sing both roles but also must demonstrate their ability to accompany these roles with dramatic gesture appropriate to each. The *p'ansori kwangdae* is a narrator who manages the presentation of the work and, at the same time, acts as a performer of the roles within the work. The dramatic gesture so essential to this task is described by Shin Chae-hyo in the following lines from his “Song of the *Kwangdae*”.

Rich in grace and full of style; Myriad manners and images, all in a twinkling; Now an immortal, now a demon-countless changes: The old and young, men women, who watch this show of Elegance and heroics as the audience, are made to cry and made to laugh. How could this not be difficult?³²

“Myriad manners and images, all in a twinkling” bespeaks a concentration of the various forms of *p'ansori* expression, all in one moment of time. Just as *p'ansori* manifests more than one given emotion or one fixed type of behavior, and just there must also be changes in rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, so must the *kwangdae*'s dramatic gesture embrace the range from immortal to demon in order to enthrall their audience. The fan, *buchae* held by the *kwangdae* and used in a great variety of gesture, is an essential tool. This fan—a stick when folded or a letter when spread—can be transformed into anything as needs demand. Just one person

³¹ Chae-hyo Shin, *Shin Chae-hyo's P'ansori Libretti*, Photoprint ed. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), n.p.

³² Ibid.

holding only one fan, minimal cast with minimal properties but capable of maximum expression, this is the essence, the charm of *p'ansori*. This essence vanishes when *p'ansori* is recorded on phonograph records and, even when reorganized into *ch'angguk*, operatic style, it quite disappears. Since *p'ansori* is sung without any kind of theatrical scenery at all, the setting of the work can be changed at will, with the use of dramatic gesture. But, once one reorganizes *p'ansori* into the form of *ch'angguk* and make use of scenery, restraints are placed upon the changing of locale and an essential feature of *p'ansori* is lost.

P'ansori is so lengthy that no one work can be performed in a single session, without a break. Therefore, since a work cannot be sung as a whole, it is performed in episodes. *P'ansori* is put together so that it can be sung in episodes and, indeed, a *kwangdae* treats favored episodes of certain works as personal specialties. Even the adaptations by individual performances by Pak Tong-jin in recent years – five hours for the “Song of Hungbu” or eight-hours for the “Song of Ch'un-hyang” – were unheard of in days of yore.

Structure and Style of *P'ansori*

The general plot line of a given *p'ansori* work will be common to all performances, but the details of its content may differ according to the individual *kwangdae* and can also change from one of their performances to another. When summarized, a common plot is quite simple. The “Song of Hungbu”, for instance, can be summarized as follows:

Nolbu drives Hungbu out.
 Hungbu saves a swallow.
 Hungbu is enriched by the swallow's requital.
 Nolbu injures a swallow.
 Nolbu is ruined by the swallow's revenge.

This plot is drawn a folk tale. In addition to the “Song of Hungbu”, the “Song of the Water Place” is also based upon a folk tale. However, while the content of the folk tale is simple, *p’ansori* goes beyond this simplicity. Investing a simple story line with complex content, *p’ansori* expresses this complexity as a detailed of the unfolding events. The reason for this detailed narrative did not lie in an attempt to expand the volume of the work but, rather, in a desire to evoke realistically the semblance of everyday life and also to express persuasively the confrontations resulting from differences in social consciousness. Such sequences as the lengthy expositions of Nolbu’s perverseness and Hungbu’s poverty or the episode in which ruffians, gangs of dancers, and pall bearers pour from an opened gourd to torment Nolbu—these are not supplied by folklore but are the creative content of *p’ansori*. And in the “Song of the Water Palace”, as well, the rabbit’s suffering continues even after his successful escape from the Dragon’s Palace: While these are not related to the development of the plot, they serve an important function by reflecting the life of the common people through the experiences of the rabbit.

There have been various discussions of the legendary origins of the “Song of Shim Ch’ong” or the “Song of Ch’un-hyang.” Nevertheless, neither *p’ansori* work is an adaptation of any one legend and it is possible that their plots, therefore created as part and parcel of the *p’ansori* works. At the same time, however, their structural principles do not differ from those of the “Song of Hungbu” or the “Song of the Water Palace.” Given the core stories—Ch’un-hyang suffers because of Governor Pyon and Shim Ch’ong endures hardship as she cares for her blind father these *p’ansori* works do not dispose of their plots with simple explanations but present concrete situations and deal with them in some detail; and rather than a premise in which suffering and hardship yield good results, these songs promote an

understanding of the serious meaning of the work as a whole. Even in *p'ansori* we do encounter plot development in which distress and suffering lead eventually to a happy result. But in *p'ansori* the process of suffering itself is more important than the happy result. *P'ansori* elicits its sympathetic response through the suffering. And herein lies another characteristic that distinguishes it as popular literature.

The content of *p'ansori*, seen as a whole, is generally sorrowful. We could even say it is tragic.³³ Hungbu's suffering, the rabbit's pitiable situation, Ch'un-hyang's suffering, and Shim Chong's sacrifice are cases in point; and in the "Song of the Red Cliff," as well, the sorrow of the terror, injury, and death of soldiers dragged off to battle occupies a central position. While *p'ansori* does, on the one hand, impart a sorrowful feeling, it also evokes laughter, on the other. Life is tragic but laughter can give us the wisdom to endure and, while critically viewing the world, overcome the tragic. The contrast of tragedy and humor is clearly manifested in the "Song of Shim Ch'ong," Shim Ch'ong's decision to sacrifice herself so that her father's eyes might be opened is very tragic. But, when closely scrutinized, it is, indeed, a foolish act. That it is foolish is suggested as the text lampoons a blind, Shim's unrestrained behavior when he indulges in his fling with Ppaeng-dok's mother. This is also manifest in the contrast of tragedy and humor in the character of Hungbu: because of his sorrow, we cannot help but sympathize; but, at the same time, because of his folly, we cannot help dismissing him. Note also the use of the tyranny and falseness of the ruling class as an object of satire in the "Song of the Water Palace" and the "Song of Ch'un-hyang," and in the "song of the Red Cliff" or the "Ballad of Paebijang," which survives only in novel form.

³³ Tong-il Cho contrasts *picham* and *pichang*, which are translated as sorrowful/sorrow and tragic, respectfully. See Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, *P'ansori-ui Ihae*, 24.

P'ansori has, one of its characteristics, what we can call “episodic independence”.³⁴ *P'ansori* is sung in episodes and its adaptations, as well, are organized in episodes, each individual episode with a distinct character. Therefore, contradictions appear amongst episodes and there are inconsistencies of expression. One who tries to find consistency throughout a given work is bound to be disappointed. But episodic independence is, itself, an important tool. In the connective narration that manages the unfolding of a work as a whole, unchanging traditional moral codes are stressed and hidebound sentiments are presented; but, at the same time, in episodes that do not conform to such codes and sentiments, iconoclastic passages appear that present a vivid image of unconforming life as it really is. *P'ansori*, because of its episodic independence, can impart a lively feeling that cannot be found in prose fiction; and it can express, without the distortion of ideological narration, the contradictions inherent in real experience. Thus, Hungbu can be an aristocrat and a day laborer at the same time. It is Hungbu's internal contradiction that he is an aristocrat in terms of consciousness while he is a day laborer in daily life. While Ch'un-hyang is a *kisaeng*, she is also not a *kisaeng*. Ch'un-hyang, the *kisaeng*, is constrained by her social status but Ch'un-hyang, not the *kisaeng*, gains human liberation by breaking free: the resolution of contradictions in the “Song of Ch'un-hyang” is directed toward these ends.

There are quite a few erudite, Sino-Korean passages worked into *p'ansori* narration. In general, these are even more erudite than those found in prose fiction. One can say that this came as a result of *kwangdae* decorating their narratives to suit the tastes of the *yangban* in their audiences. The activities of people like Shin

³⁴ This means individuality of sections.

Chae-hyo actually exacerbated this sort of deterioration. But the erudite Chinese is not always used in its original meaning.³⁵

Erudite Sino-Korean and vernacular wording are found juxtaposed throughout any *p'ansori* work. Therefore, it is fair to say that both *yangban* and lower-class audiences could enjoy *p'ansori*. But, in the juxtaposition of these two kinds of language, it is the vernacular that makes the greater impression. One consistently encounters the device of using erudite words in vernacular banter but turned around to produce different meanings. The erudite words have their proper meanings when used in connective narration. But, when appearing in non-narrative description within a scene or in the speech of characters, although they look on the surface like the self-same erudite words, closer inspection commonly reveals completely different meanings.

Connective narration has the function of conveying previously established concepts. Scans and dialogue, however, break down and give shape to new experience. Although *p'ansori* indulges in long and tedious connective narrations, these are very much a matter of formality. But whenever the text takes the form of a scene or is expressed as the dialogue of characters, it imparts a scene of reality. It is only in scenes and dialogue that the *kwangdae* invests the work with dramatic gesture and so exploits his considerable mimetic skills, in which they express a concentration of experience accumulated over the course of their life in the lower class. One of the worthiness of *p'ansori* lies in this concrete and experiential treatment.

³⁵ Particularly, Shin Chae-hyo's own reading of the *Thousand Character Classic* (*chunjamoon*). Scene: after Yi Mong-hyong first catches sight of Ch'unhyang at Kwanghallu, he returns to his study to read. See Chae-hyo Shin, *Shin Chae-hyo's P'ansori Libretti*, #7 (for young voices), n. p.

Social Consciousness in *P'ansori*

There are two kinds of theme in *p'ansori*. One is the external theme and the other is the internal theme. The external theme is expressed through the connective narration and is embellished by erudite vocabulary. The internal theme is manifested in the concrete unfolding of events in the form of scenes and dialogue, and is expressed in vernacular terms. Were we to consider only external themes, we should be able to define *p'ansori* as re-confirming certain established moral codes:

Ch'un-hyang is faithful to Yi Toryong; this promotes faithfulness. Shim Ch'ong sacrifices herself for her blind father; this promotes filial piety. The Gourd Ballad [Song of Hungbu] concerns a gentle brother and an ill-natured brother; this promotes brotherly love. In the Plum Blossom Ballad [Song of Pyon'gangsoe], a man loses himself to a courtesan; this reproves lewdness. In the Rabbit ballad [Song of the Water Palace], a rabbit deceives the dragon King and escapes with his life; this reproves foolishness. The Ballad of Huayung-tao [Song of the Red Cliff], celebrates a wise general and reproves a great villain.³⁶

But such external themes as these constitute nothing more than superficial pretexts. Although they do appear, as such, within the narrative of a work, it was not because of such themes as faithfulness, filial piety, or brotherly love that *p'ansori* moved the hearts of its audience. Although we can find in this an excuse for *yangban* audiences to enjoy the vulgarity of *p'ansori*, what they most sincerely liked was not the didactic message itself but, rather, the criticism of that message.

Although it is difficult to sort out and articulate internal themes, this is a matter intuitively understood by anyone who is at home with *p'ansori*. To such a person, a work's internal themes are clearly revealed. Just because this is such a difficult thing to organize and articulate, numerous interpretations by various

³⁶ Hyon-sok Chong, *Kyobang Chebo* (1872), quoted by Tong-il Cho and Heung-kyu Kim, 58-59.

scholar have surfaced, only to disappear. For decades, they have raised the question of what is the theme of the “Song of Ch’un-hyang” or the “Tale of Ch’un-hyang” but the reason why their discourse has missed the point is inherent in the question itself. They said the “Song of Chun-hyang” is a work in praise of a virtuous and faithful woman. Or, they said it is a work depicting free love between Ch’un-hyang and Yi Toryong. But then a counterargument appeared, asserting that Ch’un-hyang, a *kisaeng*, yielded her body to Yi Mong-nyong with eye on his wealth and rank. It is true that Ch’un-hyang clearly behaves as a *kisaeng* but, at the same time, she also behaves as a chaste maiden who is not a *kisaeng*. Nevertheless, a critique proposed that the work is illogical and erroneous. Not, so, countered another: the illogical character of the work is rather one of its virtues. Yet another said that these two kinds of behavior constitute a dual personality for Ch’un-hyang. This sort of logic, while consistent with the facts of the story, is either based on only one aspect of the work or, on the other hand, it does not fully grasp the notion of an internal theme. Only because Ch’un-hyang is a *kisaeng* while not being a *kisaeng* can this work be realized: this contradiction is fundamental to the constitution of the work. The internal theme of the “Song of Ch’un-hyang” is the effort of the non-*kisaeng* Ch’un-hyang to win out in the contradiction between the *kisaeng* Ch’un-hyang and the non-*kisaeng* Ch’un-hyang, and having done so, to overcome the constraint of social status and achieve human liberation. In this way, the internal theme is found out of the logic of contradiction.³⁷

The “Song of Hungbu” can be analyzed, using the same approach. This work shows the contradictions that arise between antiquated ways of thinking and

³⁷ See Tong-il Cho, “Themes in the Tale of Ch’un-hyang Seen as Contradiction,” in *Selected Research Papers on Korean Classical Fiction*, ed. Sang-taek Yi (Taegu: Kyemyong University Press, 1974), 75-93.

contemporary life as seen through the confrontation of the two brothers: Hungbu, who has fallen to the role of a day laborer but has not discarded his *yangban* consciousness; and Nolbu, who has amassed a fortune through industrious and heartless effort while rejecting not only his *yangban* consciousness but established moral codes as well. This phenomenon of contradiction is even pronounced in the “Song of Shim Ch’ong”, where an affirmation of blind filial piety, while continuing to be upheld, is subverted by humor. In the “Song of the Water Palace”, the same contradictory nature appears but through the use of completely different materials: these two songs speak of the unjust situation of the lower classes made intolerable by the tyranny of the ruling class, represented by the Dragon King and General Cao Cao, and seek a *modus vivendi* for the people of the lower classes. Upon seeing the Dragon King trapped by his own tactics and General Cao Cao fail because of his scheming, people of the lower class were given reason to take heart. as the lewd narrative of the “Ballad of Karujigi” (Song of Pyon’gangsoe) reveals the situation of wandering people, it refutes monistic notions regarding the conditions of life *P’ansori* was the popular literature of the late Yi period. Because it was popular literature, *p’ansori* stimulated prose fiction—a form which fell between *yangban* literature—and thus gave rise to the so-called *p’ansori* novel. After the 18th century, it led the general growth of popular literature and thus commanded a central position in the literature of the nation. The central thought of *p’ansori* posits an empirical contradiction theory of the common people, while rejecting the determinism of the *yangban* class and, at the same time, it criticizes the inequality and falseness of established society. Nevertheless, the audience of *p’ansori* ranged all the way from the king down to outcast wanderers. This point not only bears witness to the extraordinary social base of *p’ansori* but, furthermore, it also bespeaks the fluid nature of the form. It is

a fact that the bourgeoisie took a fancy to *p'ansori* and made noticeable efforts to back the *kwangdae*. However, when compared to urban mask drama, which had built up a firm base of bourgeoisie support and was clearly developing a thematic consciousness that was critical of the *yangban* ruling style and the falseness of their ideological outlook, the fluidity of *p'ansori* prevented it from taking an approach as daring as that of mask drama in incorporating empirical contradiction theory. The audience, which was totally ignored by mask drama, wielded an influence over *p'ansori*.

However, as soon as the Enlightenment Period began, mask drama was hard hit and began to slip into decline. But *p'ansori*, though it endured many instances of failure in its traditional form, did manage to recast itself as a new art and continue to gain popularity. The Japanese administration which followed upon the Enlightenment Period dismantled mask drama's base and suppressed the drama itself; but *p'ansori*, on the strength of its external themes and because of the fluidity of its base, was able to survive. In addition, the fact that *p'ansori kwangdae* were specialized artists, who could not survive unless they performed *p'ansori*, also played an essential role in the transformation of *p'ansori* into a popular entertainment of a new era.

But, today, the future of *p'ansori* is unclear. The arias passed down with these works degenerate with each passing day. The attempts to adapt *p'ansori* as operas, motion pictures, or music plays depart from the basic essentials of the form. The reason for this decline lies so much in the loss of popularity but in the deterioration of aesthetic sensibilities and in the destruction of native arts by the importation of degraded aesthetic sensibilities. The social environment that causes these things to happen, moreover, is an issue in itself. *P'ansori* is not a medieval art form. Since *p'ansori* has declined in the context of a modern society that it had

anticipated of its own accord, we must ask ourselves whether this is the fault of *p'ansori* or of the modern society itself.

Despite the the fact that great singers of yore are unmatched today and the creative process does not continue, the church should take this powerful method of story telling as a liturgical tool. It could be an effective instrument for the educational purpose and the worship for special event. The stories of the martyrdom, biography of *minjung*, and all the leaders in the Bible could be the main resource for composing the new Bible-*p'ansori*. This unique theatrical form of the story telling has to be rehabilitated in the church of Korean community.

CHAPTER 6

***Shinmyong* as An Experience of Glory to God in the Korean Traditional Theater**

Introduction

It is the general consensus of opinion among scholars that the origin of Korean traditional group performance plays,¹ such as the mask-dance drama, sprang from the village *kut*. This, in turn, indicates that Shamanism thereby underlies both the basis and historical background of these group performance plays. Even though the mask-dance drama attained its own individuality as an art form down through the ages, it still contains the archetype stylistic remnants of *kut* plays of the original era. Moreover, the mask-dance drama still carries on, in an almost intact form, the formative rules of *kut* in the conflict structure and the socio-cultural functions of *kut* in its festive nature.²

Shamanism thereby occupies a firm foundation in the life and thought of the Korean people. It appears, then, that shamanism plays a role as a centrifugal force in Korean spiritual society as *dure* in the soci-economic sphere.³ The two

¹ The words group performance here refer to a performance in which the people of a community all take part together. Traditionally, these performances were of two types: that of the *dure* (farmwork team) and *sadang-p'ae* (traveling entertainers).

² Hui-wan Chae, "On the Significance of Aesthetic-Consciousness in Korean Mask Dance-drama," *Mihak* 5 (1978): 3-25. As the conflict structure of the mask dance-drama, refer to Tong-il Cho, *T'alch'um-ui Yuksa-wa Wulee* [History and structure of the mask dance-drama] (Seoul: Kirinwon, 1989), 10-28.

³ *Dure* is a term denoting a collective team of people engaged in farmwork from which such group performances as *nongak* (farmers' festival music and dance) and the mask dance-drama were originally derived. Though many changes took place in the style of performance with the passing of time, the players always maintain their close relationship with the social life of the people in that the group-style performance format was always retained, functioning as a social device. See Kang-hyun Chu, "Study of the Village Community, Village-*kut* and *Dure-kut*," in *Kut and Nation*, ed. Minjok Kuthoi (Seoul: Hakmin-sa, 1987), 37-101.

were both transmitted from generation to generation down through the ages throughout the course of Korean history, changing in the course of time in accordance with the structure and conventions of the society. Today, however, the two have reached the turning point toward extinction. As in the case of the mask-dance drama, shamanism as the spiritual life are both facing an identical orbit of fate. However, since *dure* and shamanism are a substance accumulated either socially or spiritually, their latent and invisible influences are unlikely to fade away by any means.

Putting aside an argument about *dure* for the time being, it seems that the study of shamanism seems to constitute a study of the origin of the mask-dance drama and that the study of the mask dance-drama can also be a study on shamanism.

It has been widely known that shamanism covers a very wide spectrum of actual life rather than being abstract and spiritual in its characteristics. Such characteristics of shamanism seems to have exerted influence, to a certain degree, on the formation of secular-oriented thought on the life of the people.

Salp'uri and Shinmyong

Folk practices observed in annual customs of life, such as *chaeaeek* (exorcism of evil spirits), *pyoksa chin'gyong* (expulsion of evils and welcoming of felicity) or *nonggyong yech'uk* (praying of the bumper crops) are all based on the secular-oriented thought in the reality of everyday life. This, then, is the very life mode of the struggle with, and the enjoyment of reality.

In Korea, it is said that a certain evil spirit (*sal*) has haunted one when he or she faces some factors which prove to be a strong impediment in life. If that is the case, then survival is possible only when the evil is exorcised. To exorcise evil, to

start with it is necessary to grasp the precise causes of *sal*. Thus, *salp'uri* (exorcism of evil), which is intended to confront and overcome evils by understanding the essence of evil itself, becomes a wisdom of life and a way of survival of the Korean people.

Therefore, *salp'uri* is impossible to execute without a clear perception of the realistic world. When the real substance of *sal* is revealed, and one firmly readies his or her spirit to struggle with it, *salp'uri* firmly assures his or her basis for life. Thus, the process of reality perception, struggle with reality and resolution of reality constitutes the process of *salp'uri*.

When this process of *salp'uri* reaches its zenith, it supplies one with a superhuman power, such as uniting God and human, fusing the sacred and secular into one. At this moment the artistic impulse is brought to a climax and bursts forth into song and dance. Song and dance are both performed to receive God. In other words, song and dance are mobilized in a preparatory process to bring forth *shinmyong*. Such an artistic experience in the process of *salp'uri* is called *shinmyong*. When shamanism is called an art of ecstasy, it seems that the intended emphasis is such an aspect of the characteristics of *shinmyong*.

Shinmyong literally means that God descends and enters into the body of the supplicator. This is to embody and incarnate the soul-spirit innate in each and every person like in the doctrines of *Tonghak* (Eastern learning), which uphold that God is one with human and everything in the universe.⁴ Thus, anyone who has such an experience of art can become a God-like being by receiving this God, which descends immediately upon calling at any time, at any place, and can exert, if willing, the great power exhibited by an almighty at any time, at any place.

⁴ Yong-choon Kim, *The Ch'ondogyo Concept of Man* (Seoul: Pan Korean Book, 1987), 31-52.

Shinmyong of this nature is universal and can occur to anyone who was enlightened with the understanding that humans are with Heaven.

Shinbyung, “shaman sickness” in the initiation rite of shamanism is a process to call in *sal*; and *kangsin kut* is a process to solve the substance of *sal* and to obtain *shinmyong*; and *kongsu* is the pronouncement by proxy of God’s words. These processes must all be entered to have *shinmyong*. Therefore, a god-descending shaman one who experiences “shaman sickness” is the priest of *shinmyong* who invokes and then ignites the *shinmyong* hidden deep in the bodies of other people. This type of exorcism is best illustrated in the legend of *Ch’oyong*.⁵ The legend tells that Ch’oyong witnesses his wife sleeping with the god of the Plague, and dances, undergoing death-like torment. The god of the Plague recedes, overwhelmed by his dance, and Ch’oyong rises as the performer of *salp’uri* for the people. People ward off the god of the Plague by hanging the icons of Ch’oyong at the front gates of their houses. The legend not only tells the

⁵ The legend is believed to have originated during the reign of King Hon’gang (A.D. 875-886) of the Silla Period. The King was strolling along the East Coast one day with his retinue when suddenly they were enveloped by a dense fog. The King consulted his astrologer, who interpreted this as being a sign from the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea. The King then ordered that a shrine be built on the site in homage to the Dragon King. No sooner had the King issued the order than the fog disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and there, in the brilliant sunshine, stood the Dragon King with his seven sons, praising the King’s virtues in song and dance. The King then took one of the sons, whose name was Ch’oyong, to his court, promising him a high government position and the hand of a beautiful girl. The girl’s beauty eventually drew the attention of the God of the Plague, a disease spirit, who, taking the form of a handsome man, embarked on a secret love affair with her, engaging in frequent nocturnal trysts during Ch’oyong’s absence. One night, Ch’oyong returned home to find the couple in bed together. Instead of becoming enraged, he performed a dance, singing the following song: “Playing in the moonlight of the capital, Until the morning come, I return home, to see four legs in my bed. Two belong to me; But whose are the other two? What was my own, Has been taken from me. What now?” Upon hearing this, the evil god made a deep bow and said: “Since you forgave me knowing what I have done to your wife, I swear that I shall never step inside your house, provided you hang a portrait of yourself on your front gate so that you may be recognized.” Thereafter, the people of Silla considered Ch’oyong’s face a talisman and hung a likeness of it on their home gates to ward off evil. Later on, it might be added, the Ch’oyong Dance was performed at the royal court wherein the dancers wore a mask formed in the likeness of Ch’oyong, the purpose being to ward off evil. See Jin-tae Park, *Studies of Korean Mask-drama* (Seoul: Saemun-sa, 1985), 45-62; and Tu-hyun Yi, *Hankuk-ui Kamyunkeuk*, 51-58.

victory of Shamanistic *shinmyong* as *salp'uri* but also can be interpreted to symbolize the victory of the *shinmyong* of the people who, at the worst predicament, identifies, overcomes and expels the god of the Plague.

The stronger the forces of evil grow, the stronger the impediment in life becomes. In other words, the more and the stronger the *sal*, the more elevated *shinmyong* becomes. And when *sal* becomes the common *sal* or the common enemy, *shinmyong* also becomes common. *Shinmyong* of such nature in the process of *salp'uri* is a product of the fighting spirit in the incessant struggle against the reality in everyday life; and the more firmly determined the fighting spirit is, the more intensified the *shinmyong* becomes. The people's social consciousness and artistic impulse are united as one through group *salp'uri*. This is the way in which group *shinmyong* is acquired and achieved through the process of group song and dance. This is the very collective outburst of *shinmyong*.

When one says that the group performance plays observed at the village communal rites are "a group shamanism consisting of group ecstasy and group trance,"⁶ such an observation can be reviewed from such a standpoint as stated above.

When one also says, "As the traumatic experience of a shaman afflicted with anxiety and tension treads the process of trance and ecstasy, the group of people at the communal rites of passage proceed from the anxiety arising from the net of taboos to a contagious state of trance and consequently to *shinmyong* and excitement in the wake of trance,"⁷ It can be said that the traumatic experience of both the individual and the group alike, which leads to *shinmyong* with certainty,

⁶ Yol-gyu Kim, *Study of Korean Folklore and Literature* (Seoul: Ilcho-gak, 1971), 274.

⁷ Yol-gyu Kim, *Kut and Mask-dance Drama* (Seoul: Chindanhakpo, 1976), 25.

and the anxiety or tension confined within the net of taboos, are the process in which *sal* enters; and that the contagious state of trance, *shinmyong* and excitement are the zenith in the process of *salp'uri*. This corresponds to the process in which an oppressing force is expelled after its real substance of *sal* is identified if and when *sal* enters by dint of the unjust oppressing force.

Group *Shinmyong* in the *Madang Kut*

The process of *salp'uri* attacking and dispelling the enemy based on the perception of the enemy is nothing but the structural logic of the mask-dance drama aiming to thwart "social calamity." *Shinmyong* in the social *salp'uri* process is the very social *Shinmyong-p'uri* of the mask-dance drama. The mask-dance drama was created in the realistic understanding of the mundane events and the problems of everyday life. Its contents seem to have developed into a definite pattern while repeatedly in connection with mimesis of the reality. It is a popular festivity in which the common enemy of life is identified together and an artistic victory is won by attacking together the common enemy. The channel of "perception and expression" uniting mimesis and play on the one hand and the realistic perception and the artistic acts on the other hand forms a *madang kut* somewhat differentiating itself from an epic drama.⁸ Though it has a similarity to an epic drama in that it is the perception of reality with a critical distance between itself and the reality, *madang kut* carries both collectivity and universality in that it

⁸ As to the characteristics of group plays. See Jin-tae Park, *Studies of Korean Mask-drama*, 42-43.

dialectical integrates both work and play into one as “grouping of life” through the sharing of play and as a living art of “returning the play into life.”⁹

The mask-dance drama forces the members of the society to squarely face up to the reality of life by poignantly exposing the hypocrisy and falsehood of human and society and by presenting life as it is. As Malttugi (a feudal servant) bares the falsified prestige of Yangban (feudal aristocrats) by baring their masks and Ch'wibari (a mask of a young male) jeers at the religious falsity of Nojang (an old monk) and prides himself, without restraint, on the honest life of the people and on their primitive and instinctive desires, truth counters falsehood by exposing it. Falsehood and hypocrisy cannot be maintained without technical violence to sustain them. Truth always walks together with death by countering and facing up to such violence. The verity, though travelling side by side with death by throwing off individuality, soon acquires the social trueness in the public and common gaze of the whole group of spectators, even though it initially starts amid the gaze of each individual. Even if it begins with an abstract conception, it approaches near the realistic truth by running into the conflict and friction with the definite issues of reality. But, if the mask-dance drama ends up merely in testifying and exposing events, failing to invoke the *shinmyong* latent in every person. *Shinmyong* in every member of society becomes merely internalized as a transitory happening and remains buried in each person. The social verity acquires its collective force only when the internalized *shinmyong* is brought out and is shared commonly among people. It is a new power of truth deriving from the on-the-spot situation of reality in the form of *norip'an* (the playing ground or stage). In such a situational verity,

⁹ Hui-wan Chae, “Kongdongche Uishik-ui Punhwa-wa T'alch'um-ui Kucho [Divergence of the community consciousness and structure of mask-dance],” in *Hankuk-ui Minsok-yesul* [Korean folk arts], ed. Chae-hae Im (Seoul: Munhak-gwa Chisong-sa, 1988), 130-34.

the playing ground heaves and throbs dynamically and rhythmically while the social verity is transformed, disfigured and exaggerated.

What the channel which the group *shinmyong* symbolized is acquired through the situational truth in the Ponsan mask-dance drama and is the phasic process of life from death back to life again.

In the act of a transgressing monk, an old monk and a young girl flirt to engage in a co-habitation. Then a young man (Ch'wibari) show up, fights with the old monk of a few times, manages to win back the young girl, and the young girl gives birth to a baby of the young man. Thus, the wandering life of Ch'wibari is concluded, though tentatively. Ch'wibari's attaining a baby can be interpreted to herald the emergence of a new social leader following the victory of "Ch'wibari". The birth of a new baby puts an end to the conflict, suggesting the coming of a new world. The child's birth is a conclusion of one plot and the seed of a new start at the same time. Such an artistic solution or an artistic victory of the issue of everyday life provides the starting point people's festivals. The child's birth stands in contrast to the death of Miyal halmi (old woman) calling for the denouement. The Miyal halmi's death symbolizes more than the simple sense of defeat in which the oldness of the miyal halmi is defeated by the young life of a concubine in winning the heart of the old man, or in which the summer wins over the winter. The miyal halmi's death functions as an ordinary channel in which a requiem rite (*chinogwi kut*) is performed by villagers to send the spirit of the dead off to a better world. The almost unbelievable and sudden but ordinary death of the Miyal halmi merely vividly depicts an aspect of the death of ordinary people. Such death proves itself to be a weapon of life which hovers nearby life. Death does not signify the end of life, but it reveals a phase in which the life of people resurrects through death. Thus, the birth of a baby and the death of miyal halmi are linked in

a complementary relationship, showing a segment of the people's way of thinking that death and life are simultaneous. In other words, the death of a person depicted on the mask-dance drama is an ordinary death as a weapon of life, and it becomes the igniting point of the people's festival, signalling the birth of a new order. Such Shamanistic dialectism bespeaks the wisdom and the ethical consciousness of life which makes people's *shinmyong* as a mundane and ordinary happening by pushing the life situation of people into the world of universal truth that life and death are on the same plane.

Wandering and the Artistic Spirit

The popular *shinmyong* which is acquired by freeing oneself from an obsession with reunion and parting, with love and hate, and with life and death is closely related to wandering.

Most of the cast in the mask-dance drama are either wanderers or those who have such a tendency.

As has been suggested earlier, not only Ch'wibari and Miyal halmi but Malttugi, Yonggam (an old man), Yangban (aristocrat) and the Mokchung (monk) are all wanderers, and even the spectators at the playing around are those who are looking for something to see, snooping around from one place to another. The content of the mask-dance drama depicts the aspects of wandering life, showing almost no attachment to or obsession with the theme of "reunion and parting". This may derive from the fact that those who play the mask-dance drama are wanderers who have lost their life roots. Such background can be traced back to the nature of *hallyang*¹⁰ who is the central figure in the mask-dance drama.

¹⁰ The word *hallyang* originally meant those people from the military class who did not pass the state military examination or those on the lower echelons of the aristocratic class who were not yet

Since a wandering life presupposes no settlement at a fixed spot but a non-settling migration, it carries a connotation of openness, free exuberance, strong adaptability to reality and pioneering spirit. The Korean word meaning depart may signify a momentum for one to free oneself from stereotyped notion or a fixed emotional life, and it may enable a person to perceive reality objectively by placing a critical distance between the person and society. In this process the person obtains objectivity for his or her own struggle.

In the case of “shaman sickness” for a god-descending Shaman, a tendency is shown in which the body and the spirit float into an unknown world. This can be understood as an escape from cosmos and as a return to chaos of an eternal existence.¹¹ At the same time, this can be understood as a wandering act in the role of passage for the perception of reality through self-objectification.¹²

Display of deep understanding and strong resistance spirit to society by the cast of the mask-dance drama may derive from such wandering tendency of the cast, thus enabling them to convey their thoroughly negative and precise laughter to the spectators.

What has to be seen in this connection is the life of Ch’wibari and Malttugi in the Pongsan mask-dance drama. They accept reality as it is but fight against the impeding elements in their life. Ch’wibari is a *pulmok’an* (a servant boy) working at temple and Malttugi is a valet of the aristocrat. They confront the establishment while they secure their base of livelihood in the order of the establishment. Since

employed. However, in recent times, the meaning of the word was twisted to suggest those people who understand art and play. See Gi-baik Yi, 160, 182.

¹¹ Ryu, Tong-shik. *Hankuk Mugyo-ui Yoksa-wa Kujo*, 287-91.

¹² Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. Trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 90-93.

they can cross over the boundary separating the two confronting forces of society, they know the nature of the order better than anyone through the bottom and they can employ the best means of struggle, most objectively and thoroughly prepared. It is almost too natural that Ch'wibari and Malttugi are generally seen as those who speak and struggle for the life of people. Ch'wibari and Malttugi in the Ponsan mask-dance drama are already made typical figures of people as "problematic persons," and spectators are supplied with shinmyong from them by projecting their own images upon the acts of Ch'wibari and Malttugi.

Not only the performers of such mask-dance drama but the performers of *Sadangp'ae* (the wandering group) acquire a wide range of information in their everyday life contact in their wandering throughout the country. Thus, they can obtain a precise perception of situation since they are sensitive to the location of popular will, the direction of the public opinion and the absurdity of the social structure, and they take the role of artistic harbingers by artistically expressing (materializing) the life dream of people. Such spirit of *Sadangp'ae* performers as aesthetic priest can be termed the so-called artistic spirit.

Such artistic spirit requires an artistic talent whereby one can perform artistic acts extemporaneously in response to the call of the spectators at any playing ground. Such a talent can be acquired in an artisanship-like training which enables one to adroitly employ the specialized and refined techniques of expression. The artisanship-like training is a prerequisite requirement to artistic spirit.

Therefore, artistic spirit can be termed the spirit of the popular artists in the sense that it expresses the consciousness or the aesthetic agent of the people and for the people.

The genuine method of acquiring the spirit of the artists starts from acquiring the precise and elevated consciousness of reality through on-the-spot experiences of life and, at the same time, from acquiring the specialized artistic techniques applicable to on-the-spot performance. It can be acquired by overcoming the conflict between the dimensions of life and art, between the aesthetic consciousness of the individual and the group and by elevating one's own private *shinmyong* into the universal level of collective group *shinmyong*. Only when and such can be done, can one represent and perform the *shinmyong* of people in general, which is the artistic experience of people as a dialectic accommodation of dreams of life and art.

Shinmyong deriving from “artistic spirit” can be obtained by undertaking the yokes of peoples’ life as an artistic experience of “Shaman’s sickness” and by incessantly elevating this experience into the world of art. In this sense, one has to ruminate over the general saying that performers of the mask-dance drama are often called those who “have many *shinmyong*”, who “are excessive in *shinmyong*”, or who “have too much *kki*”. Having “many or much *shinmyong*” means that one is good at dance and song and “many or much *kki*” means the exuberant possession of artistic talent.

Genuine *kwangdae* (actors) are those who are equipped with the common *shinmyong* of people. Only when the individual *shinmyong* of a performer identifies itself with that group *shinmyong* innate in the people and is able to create a common ground of speaking for them, can a performer show up in front of people as a popular artist.¹³

¹³ This can be compared to the *commedia dell'arte* of the Italian renaissance which exhibited the artistic talent of people best while drawing an overwhelming response from people at large. Their plays have been evaluated as having been closest to the drama spirit in the archetypal sense of the word.

*Han and Shinmyong in the Tight-rope Dancing
and Pyongsin Dance*

It is said that there are dark shadows and sorrowful resentment in Korean dance. This is the sign of the pains and frustration accumulated while Koreans underwent unhappiness in the course of history. However, this sense of resentment is a force while it is sorrow, and it becomes the moving force of self-improvement. The spirit of resistance is a gateway leading from despair to hope. It is the image of a beloved one to be looked for and to meet again since one lost or parted with his or her loved one. And it is nothing but the image of *shinmyong* hidden and put away somewhere. The shadow of *han* as a negation is already embraced in the breast of justice and righteousness, large and bright, in a bigger frame. The Korean dance can be nothing but a dynamic dance of *shinmyong* struggling to free itself from the sorrow of *han*. The world of life and light after the passage of death and darkness and the world of laughter and rejoicing after the passage of tears and pains are linked to a new life and a new society which comes after *sal* or calamities, individual or social, are repulsed. It is the very utopian world of *shinmyong*.

The tight-rope dance in dance most precisely signifies the features of *shinmyong*, such as the Western or Chinese version. It may be the same in that the dancer performs the stunt on the rope, but the dancer dances, sings songs and plays, mimicking on the rope beyond the level of a mere physical and dynamic performance of feat.

If one is to walk on the rope lest one falls from it, one has to be equipped with the scientific sense of balancing oneself on the rope. In other words, one has to fully master his or her own physical fitness so as use his or her bodily movement at will. However, *shinmyong* does not occur to Koreans if such a feat

stops short merely as a display of a stunt. The exquisiteness of Korean rope dancing lies where it leaps beyond the mere display of a stunt. In other words, the playing impulse is maximized when the dance, though based on the factual logic of physical science, steps into a transcendental world, leaping over the mere logic of empiric science. This is the world of *shinmyong* playing and floating the artistic bound.

A more illustrative case is the playing on the blade. This is when a shaman actually dances on a sharp blade. It is not a mere display of stunt. The feat, which only god-descending shamans can perform, vividly symbolizes the spiritual world in which Koreans' view of the physical body is illustrated. The shaman standing on the blade completely robs the spectators of their souls and plays in the ecstatic world of *shinmyong* as an omnipotent sacred being. Spectators who respond to each movement of the shaman become the disciples of *shinmyong*. *Shinmyong* of Koreans is universalized to a point where they cannot feel the aesthetic sense when the performance is perfected to impeccability. Koreans feel a sense of aesthetic accomplishment when there is a void somewhere, somewhat rude, leaving some point for further improvement. The exquisiteness of rope dancing lies where the expert dancers on the rope seem likely to fall from the rope at any moment, while mimicking ineptitude. Here, *shinmyong* of spectators becomes leisurely and loosened. This can be a kind of an escape or deviation from regularity. This is not turning everything upside down through violent destruction, but is keeping things as they are and removing some of them from one place to another once in a while. In this is a shakedown most sustainable, humble and optimistic. Thus, the routine ordinariness is put into a new phase, furnished with a new vigor. Since this is done in a natural way, one can feel intimate rather than feeling repulsed. Mimicking is mimicking, but it is a mimicking that refuses to be

reviewed as an artificiality, thus returning itself to a new ordinariness. Korean humor derives from such a natural solecism, and a cozy laughter in such a situation forms a characteristic aspect of Koreanistic *shinmyong*.

What best illustrates the ordinary solecism or tearful *shinmyong* in coziness in such a situation is the imbecile dance.

When and if *shinmyong* reaches the zenith while a group of Koreans enjoy themselves together, one or two persons in the group are bound, almost without fail, to yield to the impulse to do the imbecile dance. Then, all these around, whether those in the group or the spectators standing outside, become more excited and amused. This dance is never to mimic or jeer at the disabled or the invalids.

The *Muae* (no hindrance) dance, which was said to have been danced by Wonhyo (a high priest of the Silla period), who learned it from street actor-players, seems to have been a kind of imbecile dance or beggar's dance. It is said that the dance originated as a means of propagating Buddhist doctrines in the form of the ordinary life of the people. Wonhyo has reached the level of the sacred-is-secular state in his attempt to popularize Buddhism by dancing the imbecile or beggar's dance among the ordinary folk.

The imbecile dance is the one which physically disabled persons are supposed to dance, but it tells us that we, after all, are physically disabled invalids. It is a dance aiming at the liberation of humankind by solving the problems of human and society while admitting that we are all imbeciles and that society is bound to have its own defects somewhere, after all. This is the dance of *shinmyong* which attempts to realize the most humanistic things in this world and to turn this world into an aesthetically beautiful utopia. It is the symbolism of Korean people's *shinmyong* creatively encompassing into one sorrow and

laughter, tension and relaxation, naturalness and solecism, invalidism and normalcy and sacredness and secularity.

Shinmyong as Korean Christian's Liturgical Experience

In the Korean traditional theater, *shinmyong* is a special artistic experience characterizing the popular aesthetic consciousness of the Korean people. This gives aesthetic value to group performance plays such as mask-dance drama and *p'ansori*.

Shinmyong is also the liturgical consciousness of the Korean Christian mind. Whenever Korean Christians participate in liturgical events, they expect and practice the *shinmyong* because the *shinmyong* itself carries a religious overtone as the spiritual basis of the people in everyday life. Among the religious characteristics of everyday life, *shinmyong* gives a dynamic character to that life. At the same time it creates a bond of consonance of community spirit by bringing the forms of everyday life to life. It also functions socio-culturally to lead the community into a communal homogeneity and a better world.

Since the function and the value of *shinmyong* have already been formed in the general life of the Korean people, research on *shinmyong* is not possible without a wide-range understanding of the general patterns of the life of the people and of the social and cultural background of group performance plays.

The socio-cultural value of *shinmyong*, besides its artistic aspect, may express marginalization in terms of satire. However, the genuine aesthetic value can be realized only when it is seen with all the other issues with which marginal people are concerned. In a sense, it may be said that the aesthetic value is immanent amidst various marginal values.

Shinmyong, as discussed so far, can become more convincing when it is integrated with the universal shamanistic world. So it can be said that the substantial picture of *shinmyong* has not yet been fully revealed due to shamanistic ambiguities.

The aesthetic picture of *shinmyong* can be further clarified when it is compared to and reviewed in contrast to the concepts of art in the Christian liturgy which could be applicable to *shinmyong*. Thus there remains for the futures study as to how *shinmyong* can be compared to some important concepts of modern art such as inspiration, imagination, insanity, spirit of genius, archetype or deep structure, and some concepts of the Orient such as rhythmic dynamism of spirit, or unequaled beauty. Taking all these into consideration, the conclusions are as follows.

When impeding elements enter the realm of life, one says that *sal* has entered. Such *sal* should be solved and repulsed if one is to live. Thus *salp'uri*, which identifies the substance of *sal* and overcomes it by confrontation, is a survival form and wisdom in the life of the people. *Salp'uri* is not possible without a clear perception of reality. It means that real worship and the clarification of the world is needed.

Shinmyong may also be compared to Korean Christian liturgical consciousness. The stronger the unjust force, the more determined the fighting spirit, and the more heightened *shinmyong* becomes. When the unjust force is the common enemy, *shinmyong* is also commonly shared. In such a common process of *shinmyong*, social consciousness and the artistic impulse of the people are united, and this is the process by which common *shinmyong* is acquired.

Shinmyong in the mask-dance drama is contrasted to the trance process of shamans and is expressed in the group behavior of song and dance. The

performers of the Pongsan mask-dance drama are those who are equipped with the common *shinmyong* of the people. Only if and when an individual performer identifies with the immanent *shinmyong* commonly shared by the people and creates the common bond of consonance with people as an aesthetic priest, can he or she be the people's artist. Therefore, the artists should be able to identify the common enemy, to struggle against it and should train themselves in the artistic technique so that they can elevate their individual aesthetic consciousness up to that of the people. Only then can the performer displays that artistic genius on the performing spot.

The reason that mask-dance drama performers can show a deep understanding of social reality and a clear-cut spirit of resistance may be their wandering nature, which makes their objective perception of reality possible by placing a critical distance between themselves and society through self-objectification.

Throughout the history of the Western Christianity, when the churches did not perceive itself as wanderers (pilgrimage), the world has suffered. Wandering life presupposes no settlement at the fix spot; it carries a connotation of openness, free exuberance, strong adaptability to reality and pioneering Spirit. This is why the performers can convey a precise laughter while they take the thoroughly negative attitude.

Shinmyong exhibited in the plays of Koreans, though it includes some philosophical elements, is created to be played in the world of art on a transcendental level. Then, it is brought back to the ordinary world again, creating a natural and warm-hearted laughter in violation of ordinariness. However, the tears of people are hidden in such laughters.

Another attribute of *shinmyong* is that tragic elements of life are turned around as comical elements, and a complexity of aesthetic sensation is created in which laughters are wrapped around sorrow. Within the dynamic *shinmyong* there are rites of passage such as sorrow, pains, parting, death and destruction. These bring tears which open the wall of sorrow.

The dynamic *shinmyong* is an artistic liturgical experience in which reunion can be made through worshipping and parting. One lives by death, and normalcy can be acquired through invalidism in the belief matrix of the Korean people. This gives rise to the birth of the people's enthusiastic and participating worship, whether on an individual or a group level, which comes from the background of the worshipping spirit of the Korean people.

Conclusion

The Korean Church has turned its back on its own culture and tradition in favor of Western Christianity. As a result, it has lost its indigenous cultural richness and value, and deprived itself of the resources available for its continuing liturgical development.

Throughout the history of the Korean Church, The church has been dominated by a narrow fundamentalistic theology brought in by the earliest missionaries, a theology that is individualistic, pietistic and apolitical. It is true that there were other Western theologies introduced into the Korean church since, but they have never been really assimilated by the people in the pews. This theology was too abstract, originated from different life experiences, and never touched the core of the Korean people.

Although the preachers and teachers of the Korean church presented an apolitical ethical message to the people, Christians never ceased to be political. The yearning for freedom and justice has erupted time and again like a volcano whenever it found chances to do so.

One reason for the lack of theological deliberation in the Korean church was the missionary policy that did not value the advanced education too highly.¹

¹ The Nevios method for missionary work was advocated by Dr. Nevios, who was a missionary to China. The board of planting and Developing Missionary Church of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. studied the method and adopted it for the missionary work in Korea. The board put out a booklet call "Nevios Method and Missionary Work" in 1899. The policy suggests that the main effort of missionary activity should be directed in evangelizing lower-class people. It also stresses that the independence of the national church should be encouraged and indigenous leadership should be mobilized for the purpose. The leadership, however, must not be trained to such a degree that they may loose contact with the grass-roots people. It is recommended that the indigenous leadership should be trained slightly above the mass of the people. See Kyung-bae Min. *The Church History of Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1972), 156-59.

At the same time, it is unreasonable to expect an ethical theology to emerge at so early a stage in a church's history.

Consequently, today, ethical problems arise in the Korean church because of its liturgical events. The Korean church's worship is very divorced from the Korean people's daily lives; that means the worship poorly addresses the ethical element. Therefore, Korean Christianity is very unprepared to commit to the social issues.

Despite the unsystematic understanding liturgy of the Korean church, the church's liturgical activities are the most frequent in the world, such as Sunday morning main worship, Sunday night praising worship, Wednesday and Friday night worship, the prayer meeting is held at every morning throughout the year without rest and more. Further, when the Korean church rebuilds a new liturgical theology, the Korean Christianity becomes a new birth for the Korean society. Here is a suggestion to the Korean Church's liturgical planners.

Firstly, the worship planners have to have a serious study of the Korean folk culture including *minjung's* play and *minjung's* spiritual background. This area gives a realization of the Korean people's ritual understanding and their spiritual value. Especially, the analytic anthropological study of the Korean shamanist ritual (*kut*) gives a benefit to understand Korean's liturgical nature.

For example, the *minjung's* understanding of play can be found within work when they were not allowed time in which to enjoy leisure. The *minjung's* play has become part of the rhythm of life, and the rhythm of life has always revolved around the annual cycle of agriculture. They have worked together and enjoyed play within their leisure time and within religious activities; and therefore, play itself has become an expression of their life. It has therefore become part of their physiology; it may even be acceptable to regard play as the *minjung's* breathing.

The *minjung's* play works by separating a group into sides who, by creating partnerships, learn the need for community and strengthen their solidarity. The play also incorporates the satirization of social injustice, in which it can report and comment on the absurdities of the social system. The raising *minjung's* social consciousness is cited by their mask-dance drama and *p'ansori*.

Many plays also include the constant repetition of particular rhythmic patterns, which allows enthusiasm to develop amongst participants. *Hung* (enthusiasm) enables *minjung* to reach the stage of consciousness where they experience separation from self. The play ends with harmony. The reality of *minjung* is shown in the play to be a continuous succession of troubles and problematic situations. The troubles that are experienced are adjusted until they become harmonic through the various functions of the *nori madang*, the place of the play. The harmony that is reached is dynamic, and so the *minjung's* play functions as steps towards reaching final harmony. Therefore, the play of the *minjung* corresponds with the pursuit of harmony from every point of view.

To understand the *minjung's* spirituality, it is necessary to have some understanding about shamanism. This is because shamanism lies at the root of the *minjung's* spirit possession consciousness. In addition to this, we can state that their religious foundations in Korea stand for spiritual enlightenment or spiritual realization, and also the religious experiences itself stands for an intense state that symbolizes eternal existence.

Spirit possession does not just occur within the contexts of religion, and there appear to be frequent solicitations by the *minjung* to achieve such a state in more earthly activities. The way that *minjung* experience possession state through a *kut* marks the high point of shamanist religion: it occurs only after long attempts to solve uneasiness. Therefore, the possession states within high forms of religion,

such as Holy Spirit possession, are of a similar nature. *Sinmyong* is a way to receive the Holy Spirit. The spirit which the *shinmyong* points to is not the same as the Holy Spirit Christian speaks of. We can, however, adopt the way of receiving *shinmyong* for experiencing the Holy Spirit.

The most traditional and essential aspects of the *minjung*'s spirit possession are evidenced in shamanism. Here, the *kut*, which in itself offers a resolution to the people's problem, is the aspect where possession is most representatively found. The reality of the *minjung*'s life is not naturally harmonious. When non-harmonious elements gain the upper hand, then the consciousness of a problem arises. It can also happen as the inverse, so that when there is no trouble, the consciousness of a problem based on the lack of harmony can evolve. Rituals therefore have as their ideal the restoration or continuation of harmony.

Spirits and ghosts also share similar identity since they are also deceased people. All gods in Korean shamanism, then, comprise ancestors, and so we can see that the concept of god is inclusive and harmonious. Spirit possession becomes a dynamic principle for harmonizing the life of the *minjung*. Consequently, the *minjung* culture can be placed within a mold of completeness and therefore harmony.

Secondly, the Korean clerics should have a knowledge of the Korean traditional theater. *T'alch'um*, mask-dance drama and *p'ansori*, mono opera, are unique forms of traditional theater in Korea. This artistic expression is a cultural object used in religious ceremonies and community festivals. The Korean mask-dance drama is performed at the social and political events. It depicts the tragedy of powerless citizens under an authoritarian regime. It also inspires the Korean people to move in an unjust and merciless society.

These theatrical forms can be used at the church's worship, youth camp, and children's program. For instance, certain American folk traditions are not realized by the first generation of the Korean-American, so the children have no bias to celebrate, such as Halloween night children's gathering. At this junction, the Korean church's liturgy planer or educator can give a new direction for both generations. The Korean mask-dance program can be suitable at the Halloween night children's gathering.

The individual mask characters can be found in the Bible and the history of the churches. When mask-dance drama is performed, it does not need to make exactly like the original costume and masks. It creates various ways depending on the plot. However, the style of dance and refrains of the rhythm should follow the original style because the style of the Korean mask-dance drama comes from its body movement and traditional refrains. The voices in the mask-dance drama just need to add a certain pitch to the normal Korean voice. The rhythm of the refrain is a common (4/4) such as ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ (dong/dong/dong-duh/kkung). The dance is simple, at the first and second beat (dong/dong), standing, waving hands and shaking head, and at the third and fourth beat (dong-duh/kkung), jumping with shaking head and hands radically on the air. These are the basic style of the Pongsan mask-dance's rhythm and dance.

P'ansori will be a powerful method of story telling as a homiletic tool. It could be an effective instrument for educational purpose and the worship for special event. The stories of the martyrdom, biography of *minjung*, and all the leaders in the Bible can be the main resource for composing the "new-Bible *p'ansori*" that means the story comes from the Bible. Dong-jin Park, a *p'ansori*

actor composed "the Story of Jesus" for the radio in 1970s.² Park's work was too long and too difficult, so it was not playable to the local churches. Despite the difficulty to perform without a special discipline, when my mother told the story of the Bible, she sang the story like a *p'ansori ch'ang* (aria) at the climax. It is easy to imitate thus melody and style to the Korean people, because *ch'ang* and is based on the Korean people's tune.

This is how to compose the Bible-*p'ansori*. The story line is like a musical but *p'ansori* is played by one singer and one drummer (accompanist). For example, "The story of Nicodemus," based on the John 3:1-22 (*TEV*). 1-4: *aniri* (introduction and dialog), 5-8: *ch'ang* in *chungmori* (Moderato), "the Jesus' Song," 9-10(a): *aniri*, 10(b)-13: after Jesus' answered, *ch'ang* in *chungjungmori* (Allegro) "You are a great teacher," 13-15: *aniri*, 16-17: *ch'ang* in *chinyangjo* (Andante) "God so Loved the World," 18-19(a): *aniri*, 19(b)-21: *ch'ang* in *chungmori* (Moderato), 22: *aniri* (end).

P'ansori is sung as a mixture of a spoken voice and the vocalized song mode. *Aniri* (voice) is inserted from time to time to let the performer improvise. *Ch'ang* is the various rhythms which they sing: *Chinyangjo* is a slow rhythm, *chungmori* is middle, and *chungjungmori* is fast. These rhythms are set by the drummer to guide the singer as he expresses them in song. When this *p'ansori* is performed, only two people are directly involved and the congregation can participate with words like these: *chota!* (Good!), *krutchi!* (Right!), and *olshigu!* This unique theatrical form of the story telling has to be rehabilitated in the church of Korean community.

² Dong-jin Park, voice. *Hung-bo-ga* [The song of Hung-bo], drum. Bong-shin Chu, Sun-kyung Records, C.D., n. d.

Thirdly, the *shinmyong* is comparable to the Western Christian liturgical experience. Without God's descending experience the body of the worshiper cannot realize the life of God's people. *Shinmyong* is an embodiment and incarnation of the Spirit innate in each and every person. God is one with humans and everywhere in the universe. *Shinmyong* of this nature is universal and can occur to anyone who experiences human and divine union through ritualistic events.

Shinmyong is not an abstract concept but a word deeply connected with the realities of life and the will for life itself. In Korean, the expression *shin-na-da*, get in high spirits³ (literally "divine wind") is often used. The expression refers to a life that is worth living, a life full of vitality, joy, and wonder. The *shinmyong* influence in *minjung* religion is great.

Phenomenologically, *shin-na-da* is the advent of the *shinmyong* within a community or individual so that they are filled with a vitality for life. It is therefore different from religious ecstasy in the sense of Christian mysticism. In the study of Korean shamanism, this *shinmyong* is differentiated in terms of individual and community *shinmyong*. Individual *shinmyong* refers to the state when the shaman alone is possessed by the spirit. However, more important is when this individually possessed *shinmyong* extends to reach the whole of the community. When the shaman alone is in possession of the spirit, the *shinmyong* is defied through the shaman, but when it enters the community, the deification is sublimated into a communal life force and vitality. In other words, religious *shin-ba-ram* is transformed into the *shin-ba-ram* (divine wind) of life.

³ "Shin-na-da," *Dong-ah Korean Dictionary* (Seoul: Dong-ah Publication, 1977).

The state and place in which the *shin-ba-ram* explodes within the community are similar to the collective ecstasy in the religious context. Through the study of the Korean shamanist ritual and the traditional theater, *shinmyong* is not a simple religious phenomenon or a phenomenon that appears through rapport with a transcending world, it must be related to the life and realities of the *minjung*. The *shinmyong* in the Korean shamanist ritual and Korean traditional theater shatters the existing system of values and order through the prayers and struggles of the *minjung* who seek a new world order. The *shinmyong* is the transforming enforcement of individuals and society. Of course, the liturgical consciousness of the people of Korea is expressed anew in Christian liberation.

The Church of Korea should acknowledge these theatrical phenomena as unique resources for the Christian liturgical theology. For the future, this artistic liturgical experience of *shinmyong* will contribute directly to the development of the Korean Church worship.

In the future it could contribute to the journey of the common human spirituality.

Appendix

Glossary of Korean Terms

Ai-nori: Children's play

Aniri: Recitative in the *p'ansori*, the passage delivered in a spoken voice.

Baebaengi-kut: A free style one man show originated shaman's ritual

Buchae: A fan

Chechon: Large festival or a ceremony to heaven

Ch'ang: Aria in the *p'ansori*, the story delivered with the melody

Ch'ang-ak or ch'ang-guk: A musical

Ch'ima: A woman's bottom garment similar to skirt

Changgu: A hourglass-shaped drum

Changsam or p'aldae changsam: A white Buddhist monk's robe

Chapkwi and chapshin: Ghosts and spirits in Korean shamanism

Chayon-shin: A spirit of nature

Cheesung: A sacrificial services in the shamanist ritual

Chegum: A cymbals

Chibaecheung: The ruling class

Chinogwi kut: A ritual to appease angry spirits of the dead ancestors

Chinyangjo: A slow rhythm of Korean folk music

Chogori: A woman's top garment similar to a blouse

Chohwa-ui hoebok: The restoration of harmony

Choksam: A women's jacket

Cholsiguna: A pattern of the shaman song refrain

Chongshin or chongsin kut: The proper gods or ritual for proper gods in Korean shamaism

Chosang kut (kori, sok) or chesok kut (sok): Seance ritual for contact with ancestors in the shamanism

Chota!: Good!

Chottae: Made of a piece of bamboo, similar to the flute

Chultarigi: A tug of war

Chungmori: A middling rhythm of Korean folk music

Chungjungmori: A fast rhythm of Korean folk music

Chupshin: Be possessed by the spirit in the shamanism

Chwibul nori: A fireworks

Chunjamoon: *Thousand Character Classic* of the Chinese

Dosa: An enlightened

Dot'ong: The spiritual enlightenment

Dure: The communal labor team

Haegum: A two-stringed Korean fiddle

Halmi: An old woman

Han: Resentment or the authentic emotional feeling.

Hankuk: An abbreviated name of Korea

Hung: Enthusiasm

Hwarangdo: The flower of youth bands

Jing: A gong

Kamgyu chuui: Instructionalism

Kangmu: A state shaman

Kangsin: God-descending in the shamanism

Kasa: The text, lyric lines

Kidae: An assistant shaman

Kisaeng: A professional (beauty) entertainer

Kkaedarum: Spiritual realization

Kkonnori: A play of the Nose

Kogyae: Acrobatics

Kongdongch'e kyolsok: To bind people together with a communal solidarity

Kongsu: Message given during the ritual by the gods explaining the cause of illness in the shamanism

Kop'uri: Ritual for helping the dead who have not reached the other world

Kori: A set of sections in the shaman ritual

Krutchi!: Right!

Kuekka: A musical

Kuenetagi: A swinging

Kut kori: A variety of kut, a ritual music with fast tempo

Kut: The Korean shamanist ritual

Kut-ch'ung: Shaman's tools are set for the performance of the ritual

Kutkori: A tune derived from farmers' music of Kyonggi-do Province

Kwangdae: An actor (actress), player, songster, vocalist

Kyunggi: Games

Madang: A courtyard; a chapter or scene in the traditional theater; works in *p'ansori*

Madang kut: A court play or ceremony

Manhwabon: A book of fiction, a comic book.

Mansubaji: A shaman song form, 12/8 beat of the faster triple time and quadruple time

Manshin: A female shaman called in Northern Korea

Mat: Taste

Maulje: Village ritual

Menari: The folk tune of the Hamgyong provinces and eastern seaboard region

Minjung: The ordinary folk, people or commoner

Minsok nori: Folk play

Minsok: Folklore

Minyo: Folk-songs

Moonwha-pae: The cultural group

Mot: The beauty

Muchun: The dance to heaven

Mudang: A shaman

Mugyok: A male shaman called in Northern Korea

Mujo: Shamanistic ancestors

Myonggarugi: The shaman advances bodily in the kut

Naerim kut: An initiation rite in the shamanist ritual

Namsuran ch'ima: A deep-blue silk skirt with gold-tipped hems

Nokkoji kut: Ritual for relieving people of grievances

Noraekarak: A songs in stanza form with no refrain

Nori: Play or game

Nori-p'an: Play ground or stage

Olshigu!: A pattern of refrain in the *p'ansori*

Olsiguna! cholsiguna!: A pattern of refrain in the shaman song, nonsense syllable

Oruen nori: Adult's play

Osimi: A female shaman called in the Hamgyong provinces

P'ansori: A mono (solo) opera drama

P'udakkori: Ritual for general healing

P'ungryu chongshin: The refined arts

Paengyii chigi: A spinning tops

Paksu: A male shaman called in Northern Korea

Palkwanhoe: A festival of the eight Vows

Panhijang chogori: A woman's top garment with purple tie-strings and deep blue cuffs and the sleeves

Peejibaecheung: The controlled class

Peeri: A woodwind instrument, similar to the oboe

Pison: Shaman rituals performed before main *kut* by the assistant shaman

Poongmul: Farmers' percussion instruments, or farmer's music

Pujong kori: Purification rite for the site of the *kut* in shamanist ritual

Puk: A barrel drum

Pyongsin: A imbecile or a cripple person

Pyongsin-ch'um: A imbecile dance or cripple dance

Purakche: Village feast

Saengsancheung: The working class

Sahoe inshik kanghwa: To strengthen social consciousness

Salp'uri: Ritual for healing acute illness in the shamanist ritual, resolution of problems

Samba: A hemp rope

Sanchonje: The ceremony of the mountain and river

Sandaegut or Sandaenori: The mask-dance drama of Sandae

Sanggo chuui: Reverence for the past

Seshi poongsok: The annual customs

Shimshin tallyon: To train one's body and mind

Shinbang: A shaman called in Cheju Island

Shinbaram: Divine wind

Shinbyung: A spirit illness or initiatory illness

Shindullim: A spirit possession in the shamanism

Shinhung chonggyo: New religions

Shinmyong naerim: A spirit descending or possession

Shin-na-da: To get in high spirits

Shinnaerim, kangshin and chopshin: A spirit descends into the body.

Siji: A formal metric form of vocal music

Sin kut: Ritual for spirit in Korean shamanism

Shinmyong: God descends and enters into the body of the supplicator in the shamanism

Sireum: A Korean wrestling

Soe: A small gong

So nori: A cow play

Songhwangje: The ceremony of heaven

- Songju kut (kori or sok):** Ritual for the God of the household
- Songnyong chehom:** The experiencing the Holy Spirit
- Sonnim kut:** Ritual for the god of children's measles
- Suhmin:** The common people
- Susimga:** A elegy
- T'alch'um:** The Korean mask-dance drama
- Tan'ga:** A short song
- T'aryong:** A ballad tune
- Taeguek:** The great absolute
- Taegum:** A wind instrument, similar to flute
- Taejabi:** An usher in the heavenly god into the hall of the *kut*
- Tahngollae:** A shaman called in the southern region of Korea
- Tahongsuran ch'ima:** A red silk shirt with gold-tipped hems
- Tangol:** A follower of the shaman
- Tongdari:** A overcoat
- Tonghak:** The Eastern learning
- Tongje:** Village ceremony
- Chinogwi kut:** A ritual to appease angry spirits of the dead ancestors
- Tongmaengy:** An ancestor worship ritual
- Tosaebi:** A male shaman called in the Hamgyong provinces
- Tungnori:** A play of the lantern
- Umju kamu:** Eating, drinking, singing and dancing
- Waeraeshin:** Alien spirits

Wonyungin: Completion

Yangban: Aristocrats

Yon nalligi: A kite flying

Yondunghoe: A festival of burning lamp

Yonggo: Spirit-invoking drums

Yangju *pyolsandae*: A mask-dance drama of the Yangju Pyolsandae area

Yongungshin: The hero god

Yongwang kut: Ritual for the dragon god

Yonil eumshik kamu: Everyday eating, drinking, singing and dancing

Yukchabaegi: A brisk and lively folk tune with six words to the line

Yumbul: A tune of buddhist invocation

Yut nori: A stick game

Yonggam: An old man, husband

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